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"Schitworde": Analysis of linguistic taboo in the history of the semantic field of excrement

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“SCHITWORDE”: ANALYSIS OF LINGUISTIC TABOO IN THE HISTORY OF THE SEMANTIC FIELD OF *EXCREMENT*

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Lastly, the title was inspired by a term from the poem "The Owl and the Nightingale."[1]

[1] J. H. G. Grattan and G. F. H. Sykes, eds., *The Owl and the Nightingale,* Early English Text Society, Extra Series 119 (1935; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1959), 10, line 286.

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ABSTRACT

Edwards, Julisa R. M.A., Purdue University, May 2015. "Schitworde": Analysis of Linguistic Taboo in the History of the Semantic Field of *Excrement*. Major Professor: Shaun Hughes.

Currently, scholarship in the field of linguistic taboo concentrates on the history of cursing, the usage of cursing in society, methodologies for collecting data on cursing, and the history and use of particular terms. However to date, there has been no examination of the semantic shifts of taboo terms, nor has there been any analyses of the history of the semantic fields of which these terms have membership, and so this study serves as a model for analyzing taboo terms according to etymological and semantic field history. This analysis reveals the interplay between language, culture, and taboo terminology because it demonstrates that as attitudes in society change, language changes, and thus results in semantic shifts of meaning and taboo status.

This thesis is structured in three main chapters: (1) Introduction, describing the purpose, analyzing the available literature on the topic, and defining the methodology; (2) Data, tracing the history of the semantic field of *excrement* from Old English to Present-Day English, with particular attention to *shit*; (3) Discussion, Conclusions, and Future Research.

CHAPTER 1 "A CURSORY INTRODUCTION"[2]

1.1 Introduction

> "There shall be no censoring of their rhetoric, no disenvoweling or bowdlerizing of their words, no in-asterisking of them. Their oaths shall be left to stand exactly as they swore them, as the fit and proper monuments to both their inventiveness and their industry."[3]

The current trend in Western public discourse is the use of politically correct (PC) language, which is the "rejection of language, behavior, etc., considered discriminatory or offensive,"[4] i.e. dysphemisms.[5] Although this is mostly true, sometimes non-PC language and colloquial speech are used in error or intentionally for solidarity purposes, for emotionally charged circumstances, for rhetorical effect[6] , and/or for "shock value" to

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[2] Chapter title of Geoffrey Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History of Foul Language, Oaths and Profanity in English* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991), 4.

[3] Ashley Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing* (London: Rapp and Whiting Ltd., 1967), 3.

[4] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed., s.v. "politically, adv."

[5] "A word or phrase with connotations that are offensive either about the denotatum and/or to people addressed or overhearing the utterance." Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 31.

[6] Paul Cameron, "Frequency and Kinds of Words in Various Social Settings, or What the Hell's Going On?" *The Pacific Sociological Review* 12.2 (Autumn, 1969): 101-4 at 101. For example, President Barack Obama incorporated Australian slang terms into his speech for a dinner at the Parliament House in Canberra, Australia with Prime Minister Julia Gillard on November 16, 2011 (i.e. "burl," "chinwag," "earbashing," "sticky wickets," etc.). Barack Obama, "After Dinner Remarks by President Obama at Parliamentary Dinner" (speech, Canberra, Australia, November 16, 2011), Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/16/after-dinner-remarks-president-obama-parliamentry-dinner. As Geoffrey Hughes states, "in the democratic ethos it behoves any dignitary, including the President, to use the lower registers in order to persuade his fellow-Americans that he has the 'the common touch'," Geoffrey Hughes, *Words in Time: A Social History of English Vocabulary* (New York: Blackwell, 1988), 228. For further discussion of register switching in the media, see Hughes, *Words in Time*, 228.

demonstrate the "semblance of power."[7] When used purposely, non-PC language, even especially taboo terms, may be used in an effort to express fellowship between interlocutors in speech acts. Indeed as found in a study conducted by Nicola Daly, Janet Holmes, Jonathan Newton, and Maria Stubbe, the taboo term *fuck* was used amongst factory workers "to express positive politeness or solidarity."[8] This example illustrates that cultural climate and values play a significant role in language attitudes and language use, and language use changes depending on context.

However besides context, it is a well-known fact that language changes, although some features of language, such as morphology and syntax, are more resistant to change than others, such as semantics. Indeed, "meaning changes relatively quickly and easily," so "most native speakers will thus be aware of semantic changes which have taken place within their lifetime."[9] Although it may seem counterintuitive to the layperson because of cultural significance, taboo terms, or rather dysphemisms, are subject to semantic shift as well, although they do not all share the same historical trajectory of usage.

The inevitable question from here is "why study taboo language at all?" As aptly stated by Margaret Fleming, examination of "[particular taboo words] gives insight into the functions of language and the processes by which it changes as it shapes, and is shaped by, the way we live our daily lives."[10]

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[7] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words,* 27.
[8] Nicola Daly, Janet Holmes, Jonathan Newton, and Maria Stubbe, "Expletives as Solidarity Signals in FTAs on the Factory Floor," *Journal of Pragmatics* 36 (2004): 945-64 at 949.
[9] April M. S. McMahon, *Understanding Language Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 174.
[10] Margaret Fleming, "Analysis of a Four-letter Word," *Maledicta: The International Journal of Verbal Aggression* 1.2 (Winter 1977): 173-84 at 180.

The initial question propelling this study, then, is what is the relationship between particular taboo words and social values? Although there is ample research on taboo and its relationship with culture, and further on swearing in general, there only are scattered studies on particular terms, and it is only the study of particular terms that can fully represent the historical cultural climate of society. This is because, although society may have differing reactions throughout its history to taboo language in general, we cannot delineate the particular cultural climate of a people without in-depth analysis of each term individually, as different terms receive separate and dissimilar reactions, both in regard to taboo status and public usage.

To address this question, this project will bring together these disparate studies in order to offer a systematic study of culture, tracing the American English semantic history of the taboo term *shit*. This term was chosen specifically because in American English speech and media, *shit* together with *fuck* "[amounts] to one third to one half of all the episodes [of profanity]."[11] Furthermore, its semantic history reveals a particular aspect of cultural response that seems to follow a broadening trajectory, which may be useful as a model for other taboo terminology, since "semantic change is a kind of evidence in itself, one which should play an important role in the discussion of social change."[12] *Fuck* was not chosen because its analysis requires further investigation than could be conducted in this study.

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[11] According to studies on taboo frequency conducted between 1986 and 2006, Timothy Jay, "The Utility and Ubiquity of Taboo Words," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4.2 (March 2009): 153-61 at 156.
[12] Hughes, *Words in Time*, 223.

In addition, although the scholarship does exist, there is no comprehensive study on the diachronic semantic behavior of this word, nor the exact relationship between this term and the cultural climate throughout history. Though there has been some discussion of etymology, scholars have not addressed the types of semantic shift *shit* has undergone, why this taboo has changed as it has, and what implications this has for societal attitudes towards this phenomenon. In response to this gap, this study will investigate the diachronic usage and semantic shift for *shit*, along with the societal attitudes towards this term, both past and present, and the relationship between taboo evolution and cultural change in order to offer a hypothesis as to why the semantic scope of this word has shifted as it has.

To this end, the following will survey the current scholarship on cursing in general and the scholarship on *shit* in particular, offer definitions and explanations of the examined phenomena, and outline the methodological approach for this study. This then will segue into chapter 2, in which the historical semantic shift of *shit* and its associated semantic field will be analyzed. Chapter 3 will analyze the changes this taboo term has undergone and consider hypotheses as to how and why the taboo on excrement has developed and why *shit* has semantically shifted along its trajectory. This last chapter will then demonstrate how culture shapes language, how societal values are mirrored in the language, and conclusions will be reached about why *shit* has changed along its particular semantic trajectory. Future research directions will also be considered.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Swearing

It is difficult to study the topic of swearing, in part because "taboo speech is so taboo that it has not been regarded as a legitimate topic for scholarly examination"[13]; this "scholastic" taboo hampers the ability to fully understand a culture's functionality, as it is just as necessary to understand what is non-normative and unacceptable as it is to understand what is normative and acceptable to society members in order to fully appreciate a culture's development, evolutionary trajectory, and composition. In addition, the fallacy of excluding the study of cursing has produced a theory of language that ignores the emotional aspects of language in lieu of "ideal formal speech…as if 'language' could be defined without reference to human emotion and motivation," which makes "linguistic definitions of language…ultimately invalid, although polite." [14]

Timothy Jay argues rather that

> Curse words are normal because they obey semantic and syntactic rules…[and they] are unique because they provide an emotional intensity to speech that noncurse words cannot achieve…. [In fact, the] connotative function of curse words is essential for speech because it provides information about feelings and emotional states that other words do not achieve.[15]

Jay's points are valid and important, but this paper will further argue that in addition to conveying emotional cues, curse words are a part of language creativity and are used for solidarity purposes beyond their emotional impact, which is an essential factor in considering a language's, and culture's, sociolinguistic makeup.

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[13] Timothy Jay, *Why We Curse: A Neuro-Psycho-Social Theory of Speech* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 2000), 10.
[14] Jay, *Why We Curse*, 10-11.
[15] Jay, *Why We Curse*, 11.

Conversely, should a researcher delve into the topic of taboo speech despite its "tabooness," gathering data is difficult because of its nature: its status as taboo makes it difficult for respondents to produce it naturally in a laboratory session, and outside of the laboratory it is specialized speech that occurs spontaneously according to context, emotional status of the speaker, and relationship of the speaker to the interlocutors, which means that studying its natural occurrence in a pragmatic context is unpredictable. However, it is exactly for this reason and for accurately describing a society that taboo speech should be studied.

Despite this taboo, a few researchers have ventured into this topic and written monographs and articles on cursing in general and *shit* in particular. Of those who have delved into the subject of swearing, a few concentrate on the overall history of swearing in English.[16] For instance, Ashley Montagu's overview of the history of cursing in antiquity and through Anglophone culture details the evolution of cursing, highlighting the fact that much swearing was limited to the religious semantic field, painting the picture that modern obsession with taboo words pertaining to sexual intercourse, sexual organs, and bodily functions did not start to develop until World War I. This is interesting because, if true, we might expect that the taboo words that "draw their force form the dark and tumultuous arcanum of sex and the eliminative functions"[17] would not have been used in insults, which according to the semantic and usage history is false. Moreover, although Montagu states that "four-letter words…[have] formed part of the

[16] See Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*; Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History*; and Melissa Mohr, *Holy Shit: A Brief History of Swearing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
[17] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing,* 300.

swearer's vocabulary for many centuries,"[18] his discussion of *shit* is not strictly accurate and is not given the same detailed treatment as the taboo term *fuck*, nor is the semantic field excrement analyzed. Lastly, Montagu wrote this in 1967, which makes its "contemporary" data dated and only relevant to describe *shit* as it was used 48 years ago.

In contrast to Montagu, Geoffrey Hughes' treatment of swearing is a history of the phenomenon strictly in English, though presenting a clearer picture of usage, including how "what are termed in America 'the Big Six', sometimes Bigsix (*shit*, *piss*, *fart*, *fuck*, *cock* and *cunt*)" have been used over the centuries. However although Hughes argues that "our ignorance about the origins of several of the major swear-words is one aspect of the problem…[and] an analysis in terms of origin is revealing,"[19] his discussion of *shit* and *turd* is undetailed and untraceable with questionable claims, which limits the historical representation of this term and its true significance and usage in the English language.

Similarly Melissa Mohr's history of swearing seems to be a mix between Montagu and Hughes in that she first discusses swearing in antiquity with the Romans and its evolution through English, but goes into more detail about the social historical context. For instance, she gives examples from "medieval conduct books"[20] to describe how manners have changed over time as people then had "a low threshold of shame and repugnance,"[21] which she postulates is why words referring to bodily effluvia "carried no

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[18] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing,* 303.
[19] Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History*, 24.
[20] Mohr, *Holy Shit*, 104.
[21] Mohr, *Holy Shit*, 106.

onus of taboo."[22] However, she doesn't have any specific, chronological etymological data on any of the swear words to demonstrate the evolution of their semantic fields.

Unlike Montagu, Hughes, and Mohr, Timothy Jay discusses contemporary cursing in America in his book, *Cursing in America*, the current (as of 1992) scholarship on cursing, how cursing develops in childhood, the offensiveness of curse words, and curse words in media and law. However, he states that "for the study of cursing, the pragmatics of usage, or how the words function in use, is more important than fitting the words into grammatical or etymological categories,"[23] which dismisses the fact that the etymological history in part describes how these words were used over time. It is true that in sociohistorical linguistic research, a researcher does not have access to informants or spoken language data, but it is still necessary to assess the data we do have to try to understand how cursing evolved over time.

1.2.2 *Shit*

When considering why one might study *shit*, Margaret Fleming argued it best when she said: "

> Well, why not? *Shit* has not had its share of serious scholarly attention; but, like any other word, it has a history; it has grammatical characteristics; and it has a range of meanings wider than one might suppose. But also, because of its second-class citizenship in the English language, *shit* calls attention to itself and is thus easier than most words to isolate and study.[24]

Continuing with her analysis, Fleming briefly tracks the history of *shit* from Indo-European through PDE and further briefly discusses some associated euphemisms and

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[22] Mohr, *Holy Shit*, 106.
[23] Timothy Jay, *Cursing in America: A Psycholinguistic Study of Dirty Language in the Courts, in the Movies, in the Schoolyards, and on the Streets* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Co., 1992), 1.
[24] Fleming, "Analysis of a Four-letter Word," 173.

their histories.[25] However, her subsequent analysis of the word does not fully represent its history and usage, nor does she consider how it was used creatively in the ME period, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 2. She further states that "today *shit* has one literal meaning, the same it has always had, but many figurative uses,"[26] but this is no longer the case as it has broadened beyond its original meaning, separate from "figurative" usage. It seems that Fleming equates this broadening with figurative usage rather than with meaning expansion, though it is possible that this was the state of the term in 1977. Lastly, she does not look at the history of the semantic field of excrement, which is imperative in order to understand the usage history of *shit*.

A few others have written a little on *shit*, such as Geoffrey Hughes in his *Encyclopedia of Swearing*. In it, Hughes briefly discusses the evolution of the usage of *shit* from OE to PDE;[27] however, he too fails to examine the history of semantic field of excrement, mostly ignoring the other terms we have used in English and the relationship between their usages and *shit's* own usage, which misrepresents exactly how this term has been used in the language.

1.3 Definitions, Lexical Semantics, and Semantic Fields

Before detailing the methodology and analyzing the semantic and etymological history of *shit,* it is necessary to define what semantics is and the mechanisms at work in meaning change. It is also necessary to explain the anthropological meaning of taboo, its

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[25] Mac E. Barrick provides a list of some euphemistic terms for diarrhea and a very brief history of usage. See Mac E. Barrick, "A Running Commentary on Diarrhea," *Maledicta: The International Journal of Verbal Aggression* 8 (1984-1985): 95-104.
[26] Fleming, "Analysis of a Four-letter Word," 177.
[27] Geoffrey Hughes, *Encyclopedia of Swearing: The Social History of Oaths, Profanity, Foul Language, and Ethnic Slurs in the English-Speaking World* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2006), 432-34.

history and uses, and the mechanisms involved in semantic shifts of taboo terminology (i.e. social pressures, etc.) so as to better understand the process by which meanings change for this lexical field.

1.3.1 Meaning

According to Dirk Geeraerts, "Linguistic meaning in general is defined as a psychological phenomenon, and, more specifically, change of meaning is the result of psychological processes."[28] Semantics is the field in linguistics concerned with the study of meaning and meaning change "of every kind of constituent and expression in language, and also of the meaning relationships between them."[29] Furthermore, the structure of language "permits boundless meanings to be created from a finite set of listemes,"[30] or "language expressions[s],"[31] which means that the number of ways in which the finite set of words we have available in our lexicon can be combined is infinite.

However, there are some constraints on meaning in that even though "the number of meanings which might be conveyed through language – given 'world enough and time – is without bounds…human beings are capable of producing only a limited, clearly finite, set of speech sounds…[and] there are certainly limits on our understanding and processing the infinity of mostly completely novel linguistic symbols which would be required to encode an infinity of possible meanings."[32] This means that "as a consequence, meaning can be conveyed economically"[33] with "different shades of

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[28] Dirk Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 11.
[29] Keith Allan, *Natural Language Semantics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2001), 6.
[30] Allan, *Natural Language Semantics*, 7.
[31] Allan, *Natural Language Semantics*, 6.
[32] Hans Henrich Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics* (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1986), 280.
[33] Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 280.

meaning, or even completely unrelated meanings, provided that the linguistic, social, and cultural contexts make it possible to recover something approximating the intended meaning."[34] It is this economy of language that allows for semantic change to be a frequent phenomenon.

1.3.2 Lexical and Semantic Fields

As aptly stated by Dirk Geeraerts, "language…has to do with categorization: it stores cognitive categories with which human beings make sense of the world,"[35] which we might understand as meaning categories. This is the idea behind lexical fields which are "[sets] of semantically related lexical items whose meanings are mutually interdependent and which together provide conceptual structure for a certain domain of reality,"[36] or rather a "collection of sense-related words which delineate each other mutually."[37] However, Geeraerts has noted the criticism that the term *lexical field* is limiting because meaning extends beyond particular lexemes into phrases, so for the purposes of this study, *lexical fields* will be called *semantic fields*.

1.3.3 Semantic Change

As aforementioned, semantic change simply refers to "changes in meaning and lexical inventory"[38] in language over time. In addition, it is one of the features of language that is least resistant to change because "just as cultural change demands the invention of a new terminology for new phenomena, changes in the geographic

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[34]Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 281.
[35] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantic*, 11.
[36] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantic*, 52.
[37] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantic*, 54.
[38] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 174.

distribution of a language may motivate alterations in the meaning of words, so that the lexicon of a language might better suit a new natural or sociocultural environment,"[39] which is to say that as culture changes, the communicative needs of that culture also changes, which in part precipitates semantic change. This is helped along by the fact that "words [in natural languages] are typically polysemic; each has various meanings or covers a whole range of shades of meaning,"[40] language "is transmitted discontinuously" in that the next generation does not receive a "fully-formed grammar" but must "create one for themselves on the basis of incoming data,"[41] and meaning is normally assigned arbitrarily between signifier and signified.[42] This means that meaning is a highly flexible, adaptable, and somewhat unpredictable construction that changes based on the needs of the user.

1.3.3.1 Mechanisms of Semantic Change

As for the process, semantic change is precipitated by linguistic conditions, "material culture…[from] technological innovation," "social causes,"[43] and "psychological" pressures, the latter "[figuring] largely in taboo and euphemism."[44] As a result, meanings of lexemes sometimes generalize, extending the range of meaning for a given lexical item,[45] which "paradoxically, [reduces] the amount of information conveyed about each [context]" because although there is an increase in "the number of contexts in

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[39] Robert J. Jeffers and Ilse Leihste, *Principles and Methods for Historical Linguistics* (Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1979), 131.
[40] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 176.
[41] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 177.
[42] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 177
[43] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 180.
[44] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 181.
[45] Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 301.

which a word can be used," the amount of information conveyed is not as specific.[46] This basically means that the term "stands in a relationship of…superordination to the older meaning," creating a new range of meaning that includes the older meaning.[47] Robert J. Jeffers and Ilse Lehiste offer the term *bedlam* as an example of linguistic extension, as it "was originally the name of a specific hospital in London. The word now refers to any chaotic situation."[48] Another example would be the brand name C*hapStick*, which has been generalized to refer to any type of lip balm.[49]

Another process known as specialization restricts the lexeme to a particular meaning(s), which "paradoxically also involves an increase in information conveyed, since a restricted form is applicable to few situations but tells us more about each one." [50] Furthermore, it is in "subordination…to the older meaning" in that "if the semantic range of application of an item is conceived of in set-theoretic terms, specialization implies that the range of the application of the new meaning is a subset of the range of the old meaning."[51] A model example of specialization is the Present-Day English word *starve*, which "means 'to die of hunger'" or 'to be very hungry', whereas "its Old English ancestor *steorfan* meant more generally 'to die'."[52]

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[46] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 178.
[47] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 26-27.
[48] Jeffers and Lehiste. *Principles and Methods,* 127.
[49] This process is better termed as genericization, in which a brand name moves from referring to a specific brand to standing in as the generic term for a product. However, the broadening of the term follows the same principle as semantic generalization.
[50] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 178.
[51] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 26.
[52] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 178.

Generalization and specialization are often the result of metaphor,[53] which in the case of dysphemism frequently gives rise to euphemism[54] or orthophemisms, the latter seeming to most often to "involve latinate [and greek] vocabulary, partly because such words tend to have more prestigious connotations…and partly because their meaning will be less transparent to the casual observer."[55]

Other equally important language change processes involve changes in emotive connotation. According to Dirk Geeraerts, "the major types of emotive meaning change that are usually distinguished are pejorative change, i.e. a shift towards a (more) negative emotive meaning, and ameliorative change, i.e. shift towards a (more) positive emotive meaning."[56] Geeraerts offers the example of "*silly*," for pejoration, "which formerly meant 'deserving sympathy, helpless or simple', but which has come to mean 'showing a lack of good judgement or common sense'."[57] An example of amelioration would be "the history of the word *knight*, which originally meant 'boy, servant,' and thus indicated a considerably more lowly social position than it does now."[58] Perhaps most important for

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[53] "An imagined link is established between two concepts, allowing the transfer of a label from one to the other," McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 182.; See also Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 284-286; Hans Henrich Hock and Briand D. Joseph, *Language History, Language Change, and Language Relationship: An Introduction to Historical and Comparative Linguistics*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009), 218. Example: Drop a bomb = to defecate. Here "bomb," an explosive projectile, is a label that is transferred to feces, becoming a euphemism for defecation. See Tom Dalzell and Terry Victor, eds., *The New Partridge Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1: 748.

[54] Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 293; McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 181. "A euphemism is the means by which a disagreeable, offensive, or fear-instilling matter is designated with an indirect or softer term. Euphemisms satisfy a linguistic need. For his own sake as well as that of his hearers, a speaker constantly resorts to euphemisms in order to disguise an unpleasant truth, veil an offense, or palliate indecency," Charles E. Kany, *American-Spanish Euphemisms* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1960), v.

[55] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 182. See also Hughes, *Words in Time*, 101, 228-29.

[56] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 28.

[57] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 28.

[58] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 28.

the purposes of this discussion is that emotive (or connotative) changes often accompany denotative changes,[59] meaning that these semantic processes often work together and connotative changes may precipitate the denotative changes, especially in the case of taboo terminology.

There are other such processes as reinterpretation,[60] idiomatic restrictions,[61] new word formation,[62] and sometimes words are even lost from the lexicon altogether, the meaning either subsumed under another lexeme or it falls out of use due to the aforementioned pressures (an example of this is the Old English Dual Person pronouns *wit, unc, uncer, git, inc,* and *incer* subsumed under the Modern English *you*, *youse*, or *you all*). The latter occurs most often occurs with taboo terms because they are thought of as distasteful or dangerous, and so the original lexemes cannot be used for either etiquette or superstitious reasons.[63]

1.3.4 Taboo

Although it may seem counterintuitive to the layperson because of cultural significance, taboo terms are subject to semantic shift as well. However before discussing the mechanisms of taboo meaning change, we must define "taboo."

According to Edward Shortland, "the word *tapu*, commonly written *tabou*,"[64] originated in Polynesia and "was made familiar by Captain James Cook in the narrative

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[59] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 28.
[60] See Jeffers and Lehiste. *Principles and Methods,* 129.
[61] See Jeffers and Lehiste. *Principles and Methods,* 129-30.
[62] See Jeffers and Lehiste. *Principles and Methods,* 130-31.
[63] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 181; Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 144, 161-62.
[64] Edward Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions of the New Zealanders*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans & Roberts, 1856), 101. See also A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *Taboo: The Frazer Lecture 1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 5. Radcliffe-Brown states that in the Polynesian languages, *taboo* means "'to forbid'" or "'forbidden'." However to be precise, H. W. Williams

of his third and last voyage around the world."[65] Shortland goes on to postulate that the term probably meant "[to be] 'marked thoroughly,'" based on the meaning of the word "*ta*, to mark," coupled with the adverbial intensifier "*pu*."[66] In addition, he says that it "only came to signify sacred or prohibited in a secondary sense; because sacred things and places were commonly marked in a peculiar manner, in order that every one might know that they were sacred," and that should anything come into contact with a tabooed item, that contaminated item would then share the taboo.[67]

English speakers have since appropriated this term, in which "it is used indifferently as noun, adjective, participle, or verb: a 'taboo' is a prohibition"[68]— and it has evolved in the English language to mean "a proscription of behavior that affects everyday life…[and arises] out of social constraints on the individual's behavior where it can cause discomfort, harm or injury"[69]; we often see this in Western public discourse and media in which language is censored to avoid offense or discrimination between interlocutors from the use of taboo terminology. In fact, it seems that because "stigma attaches to taboo topics[,] the shadow is constellated and follows those who speak of it,"[70] meaning that usage of taboo terminology is usually associated with members of

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states that *Tapu* means "*Under religious or superstitious restriction;* a condition affecting persons, places and things, arising from innumerable causes," H. W. Williams, *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, 7th ed. (Wellington: Government Printer, 1971), 385.

[65] Hutton Webster, *Taboo: A Sociological Study*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1942), 3. See also Keith Allan and Kate Burridge, *Forbidden Words: Taboo and the Censoring of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3-4.

[66] Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions,* 101.

[67] Shortland, *Traditions and Superstitions,* 101-02; See also Radcliffe-Brown, *Taboo: The Frazer Lecture 1939*, 5-6; and Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 2-4.

[68] Webster, *Taboo: A Sociological Study*, 2.

[69] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 1.

[70] Leila Ryland Swain, "Eros in the Toilet: An Inquiry into the Nature of Toilet Dreams in Clinical Practice," *Counseling Psychology Quarterly* 24.3 (September 2011): 247-55 at 250.

lower socioeconomic status and thus many times those who use taboo language are judged as "coarse."[71] This, however, does not preclude the usage of taboo terms in different registers and speech communities for the purposes of in-group solidarity and "ritual insults," [72] "subversion of social and religious institutions,"[73] or "emotive [responses]" to stimuli.[74]

In fact, due to use in spite of socially stigmatized taboo connotations, taboo terms often broaden to signify concepts outside of the realm of the original meaning. For example, as aforementioned in American English speech and media, *shit* and *fuck* together "amount to one third to one half of all the episodes [of profanity],"[75] and Geoffrey Hughes confirms that "the 'lower' physical faculties of copulation, defecation and urination have come very much to the fore as referents in swearing";[76] however, the usage rarely refers to the tabooed signifieds, and they are used rather creatively beyond their original meanings such as the idioms for indifference, i.e. to not "give a *shit*/*fuck*." [77]

1.3.4.1 Taboos and Social Context

However, investigating semantic shift in taboo terminology is a somewhat difficult undertaking. As aptly stated by April M. S. McMahon, "one of the main obstacles to the analysis of semantic change is the inextricable link of meaning with

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[71] Edward Sagarin, *The Anatomy of Dirty Words* (New York, Lyle Stuart, 1962), 35; See also Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History,* 2-3; and Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 322.
[72]Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 89. See also Ruth Wajnryb, *Expletive Deleted: A Good Look at Bad Language* (New York: Free Press, a division of Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2005), 35-38.
[73] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 1.
[74] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 88. See also Wajnryb, *Expletive Deleted*, 24-34.
[75] According to studies on taboo frequency conducted between 1986 and 2006, Jay, "The Utility and Ubiquity of Taboo Words," 156.
[76] Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History,* 4.
[77] More examples will be examined in chapter 3.

culture," which means "that to understand a change in meaning, we also require a good grasp of the socio-cultural situation within a speech community."[78] This also necessitates the understanding of cultural evolution because as with meaning, cultural values also change, which means "the attitude of speakers and hearers to particular words may also change, as the value assigned to the referents of words alters."[79] It is therefore imperative to assess the cultural climate of any particular period of time to fully understand the motivations behind semantic change, which is otherwise characterized as a "'fuzzy'" and unpredictable process.[80]

This is at once both useful and problematic, as "cultural context is an extremely specific factor which does not generalise to other changes,"[81] effectively complicating any formulation of an overarching model that explains all semantic change. Furthermore as Allan and Burridge surmise:

> The meanings and forms of some words can be traced back to several different sources; the paths from these sources converge and mutually strengthen one another as people seek a figure that is apt. In these ways taboos and the attendant censoring trigger word attrition, word loss, sound change and semantic shift. They play havoc with the standard methods of historical linguistics by undermining the supposed arbitrary link between the meaning and form of words.[82]

This means that taboo terms seem to be in a lexical category all their own, in which more factors must be taken into consideration than can possibly be explained by constructing models of linguistic universals. Moreover, taboo terms are given to "frequent vocabulary

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[78] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 175.
[79] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 179.
[80] Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 308; See also Hock and Joseph, *Language History*, 10.
[81] McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 175.
[82] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 2.

renewal"[83] because "the new expression, in turn, tends to become taboo, since it is likewise felt to be too closely linked with the tabooed point of reference."[84] This leads to cross-varietal synonyms[85]—such as poop and feces for *shit*—and a plethora of words that slowly garner higher levels and deeper shades of taboo. Thus, the history behind taboo words can only be understood in combination with cultural context because they are essentially social constraints on language and behavior based on cultural values, which necessitates an altogether separate model of change for words so closely tied to cultural climate so that any evaluation of semantic shifts surrounding these terms must necessarily take into account the evolution of culture through history.

However, as Christopher Fairman concludes, "Our understanding of taboo language is hindered by taboo itself. Early lexicographers under the influence of the cultural taboo excluded the [words] from their dictionaries,"[86] which means that since the historical cultural climate surrounding Anglo-taboo language made these words taboo in the written (and most likely spoken) word, inquiry into the history of the terms both illuminates and is hindered by historical societal values and mores. Of course, Fairman does ignore the fact that there were specialized dictionaries which included taboo terminology, such as Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, published in 1785; however as this was written during the Early Middle English (EME)

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[83] Hock and Joseph, *Language History,* 220.
[84] Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 293; See also Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 242; and Allan, *Natural Language Semantics*, 160.
[85] "Words that have the same meaning as other words used in different contexts," Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 29.
[86] Christopher Fairman, *Fuck: Word Taboo and Protecting Our First Amendment Liberties* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2009), 33.

period, the taboo terms were usually spelled with non-alphanumeric characters, even in these specialized dictionaries on slang and "vulgarity."

1.3.4.2 Taboo Types

As with meaning, semantic change, and taboo, it is necessary to define and examine the types of taboo. With the above discussion in mind, any complete picture of a society's cultural climate must examine *all* types of taboo to fully understand the nuances of cultural evolution; this next section, however, must be limited to taboos surrounding *shit* for the purposes of this study, but it would be a worthwhile undertaking for future scholarship in order to fully define the shades of American culture, or any culture for that matter.

1.3.4.2.1 Society's Distaste for All Things Bodily Waste

Oftentimes, taboos are placed upon "sex, micturition[87] and defecation [organs]"[88] (i.e. SMD organs) and their effluvia.[89] This is practiced in many cultures, especially pre-industrialized societies, and euphemisms were and are used to refer to SMD organ "effluvia to protect an individual from [the] danger" because of their usage in malevolent or mischievous folk magic, [90] which would otherwise put the unsuspecting victim in "metaphysical, moral or physical risk, or [they could] contaminate others."[91]

In the classical world of early Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, it seems that bodily effluvia and their associated organs were despised as filth (although oftentimes

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[87] This refers to urination. *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 3rd ed., s.v. "micturition."
[88] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 144.
[89] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 161.
[90] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 161.
[91] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 27.

excrement and menstrual blood served as antidotes to ailments),[92] but much of their concern was centered on issues of theology: 1) whether Jesus was polluted by Mary's "filthy womb," developing in close proximity to her SMD organs and excretions,[93] and 2) whether he had a corporal body that excreted "filth" as all other human beings do.[94] These concerns—and the desire "to make the religious other disgusting" through "slanders involving uncleanness"[95]—lasted well into the Middle Ages. Although this does indicate disgust with and awareness of bodily effluvia as filth, most of the taboos and concern seemed centered on menstrual effluvia and not as much on fecal matter.

However even as we have moved away from folk magic and concerns about the bodily functions of the supernatural, taboos survive still due to "distaste and concerns about pollution."[96] Furthermore in terms of socio-cultural context and societal attitudes, taboo terms seem to become the physical extension[97] of the 'thing' in the real world "where the linguistic term behaves as if it were a metaphor of its non-linguistic, real-word point of reference: The 'name' becomes confused, in a very striking and salient manner, with the 'thing' (or person) which it denotes."[98] A poignant example of this is the common reprimand parents use to scold their children for violating the profane-language taboo, which is telling the child to "wash their mouth out with soap" because

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[92] Alexandra Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust in Medieval Religious Polemic*, (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 29-30.
[93] Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 47-48, 59-66.
[94] Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 131.
[95] Cuffel, *Gendering Disgust*, 48-49.
[96] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 162; See also McMahon, *Understanding Language Change*, 181.
[97] The physical realization of a "time, place, thing, or event in the world" or any possible time or world. Elaine Francis, "Week 2: Sense, Reference, and Anaphora," Class Notes, ENGL 51100 Semantics from Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, January 21, 2014; Allan, *Natural Language Semantics*, 47.
[98] Hock, *Principles of Historical Linguistics*, 293.

the taboo words are unconsciously associated with physical dirt.[99] This is illustrated in the film *A Christmas Story*, which is set in the 1940s, when the main character Ralphie says "the F-dash-dash-dash word," and must then participate in the ritual eating of soap as punishment.[100] Curiously although fears of folk magic have faded in many cultures over the years, the superstitious connotations and psychological extensions into the physiological world of taboos survive, even in 'modernized' societies.

1.3.5 Cursing

> "It may for the present suffice to say that cursing is a form of swearing and that swearing is a form of cursing."[101]

To the layperson, cursing, cussing, swearing, using obscene or profane language, and saying "dirty words" all refer to the same basic phenomenon: the use of language not deemed appropriate for the public sphere due to their taboo status, yet it is still more involved than this simple definition as one can also attribute this description to language usage between registers.[102] Furthermore it seems that when "we talk about 'swearing,' 'cursing,' and 'using bad language',…the meanings differ even while, confusingly, the words we use are the same or similar."[103] Ashley Montagu tries to disentangle the shades of meaning between these meta-terms by postulating that "while the swearer swears for immediate relief, not caring a snap about anything else, the curser curses with the

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[99] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words,* 41, 242.
[100] Jean Shepherd, Leigh Brown, and Bob Clark, *A Christmas Story*, directed by Bob Clark (1983; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video Inc., 1997), DVD.
[101] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 35.
[102] "Registers are an example of a particular kind of language being produced by a particular kind of social context," Peter Trudgill, *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society,* 4th ed. (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2000), 82.
[103] Wajnryb, *Expletive Deleted,* 16.

deliberate object of offending and discomfiting an enemy,"[104] which we might interpret as taboo terminology is used with intention and direction when cursing and as an unintentional phenomenon when swearing. Montagu further defines swearing as "a culturally conditioned form of behavior…permitting the excess energy of frustration to express itself in harmless verbal aggression and of restoring the organism to equilibrium[,]…the culturally conditioned verbal expression or venting of the aggressiveness that follows upon frustration,"[105] and "as a substitute for actual physical assault."[106] Timothy Jay tries to further flesh out cursing by defining it as "the utterance of emotionally powerful, offensive *words* (e.g., *fuck*, *shit*) or emotionally harmful *expressions* (e.g. *kiss my ass, piss off, up yours*) that are understood as insults,"[107] which definition highlights the emotive power of taboo terminology beyond frustration. However, although these two definitions do cover some of the connotations of cursing/swearing, both ignore how taboo words are used for solidarity and humor,[108] though Montagu indirectly acknowledges that swearing is used for solidarity purposes when he states that "swearing is contagious and mutually reinforcing in certain situations…[and that] the presence or absence of swearing is a socially developed trait and strongly underscores the social nature of swearing."[109]

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[104] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 52.
[105] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 78.
[106] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 75.
[107] Jay, *Why We Curse,* 9.
[108] Many times, taboo terms are essential to the punchline of a joke.
[109] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 88-89.

1.3.5.1 Cursing Types

Perhaps as important as defining the act of swearing is considering the "types" of cursing. According to Ashley Montagu,

> Words possessing a high emotional charge are the most effective with which to swear, not because they normally force their way to the surface more readily than others, but because of their puissance they constitute the most pulverizing verbal projectiles at our disposal. Hence, the armament of words is drawn from the sacred; from the prohibited; from sex, the sexual organs and functions; from the obscene, from filth, the scatological, and all things offensive,[110]

or in other words, from tabooed phenomena, undoubtedly because of their emotional force. Timothy Jay goes further in creating particular categories because "historically and psychologically the use of offensive language is a coherent event…[in] that such usage fulfills specific types of needs and intentions of the speaker and listener."[111] His categories include: Cursing, Profanity, Blasphemy, Taboo, Obscenity, Vulgarity, Slang, Epithets, Insults and Slurs, Scatology.[112] Cursing, Profanity, and Blasphemy all have something to do with using religious terms irreverently, although cursing "could also be non-religious but still wish harm to the target person."[113] With regard to taboo and obscenity, interlocutors are often restricted by social sanction from talking about taboo topics, whereas "obscenity functions to protect listeners form harmful language" that is "disgusting to the senses."[114] Vulgarity and slang relate more to registers and groups of people, referring to language used in lower socioeconomic climes, or especially in the case of slang, "in certain sub-groups (teenagers, musicians, soldiers, drug users, or

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[110] Montagu, *The Anatomy of Swearing*, 90.
[111] Jay, *Cursing in America*, 2.
[112] Jay, *Cursing in America*, 2-9.
[113] Jay, *Cursing in America*, 2.
[114] Jay, *Cursing in America*, 5.

athletes) for ease of communication" for solidarity and group-identification purposes.[115] Epithets might be understood as interjections, or "brief but forceful bursts of emotional language," which may or may not have an intended target, whereas insults and slurs have an intended target and are spoken with the express intention to attack and offend an interlocutor. Lastly, scatology refers to terms concerning "human waste products and processes."

From these categories, s*hit* would fall into Scatology, Epithets, Vulgarity, and Taboo. *Shit* is categorized as a taboo for this study because it is still a "forbidden word" and topic that is subject to "taboo and censoring,"[116] as bodily excretions and associated organs are considered taboo topics and fecal matter is "*the* most taboo" of "all bodily excretions."[117] Categorizing this word is useful in understanding the contemporary attitudes and usages of the term, though it should be clear that these categories do not have clearly defined lines and terms may fall into more than one category.

1.4 Methodology: Semantic Processes and Semantic Fields

When approaching the topic of lexical semantics and semantic history, the predominant concern of scholars is to establish a working model that can effectively account for all types of semantic shifts. Accordingly, semanticists "try to explore the mechanisms of semantic changes" through establishing categories of semantic shift patterns.[118] Some such patterns are generalization, specialization, amelioration,

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[115] Jay, *Cursing in America*, 6.
[116] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 237.
[117] Lauren Rosewarne, *American Taboo: Forbidden Words, Unspoken Rules, and Secret Morality of Popular Culture* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2013), 35.
[118] Mika Shindo, *Semantic Extension, Subjectification, and Verbalization* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 2009), 1.

pejoration, and word loss, as defined above, and this study will be limited to examining those particular processes because they play a particular role in the semantic shifts of taboo terminology, and *shit* in particular, because of the natural emotive power of these words. Although there are many methods to track diachronic changes, a useful model for examining these kinds of changes in taboo terminology is looking at all terms in particular semantic fields, which gives us valuable information about words used in conjunction to particular taboo words and the relationships between these words in usage.

There is precedent for this kind of study: in 1931, Jost Trier "[investigated] how the terminology for mental properties evolves from Old High German up to the beginning of the thirteenth century," which he intended to trace through "to contemporary German," but never completed.[119] Since that time, many have undertaken such investigations into semantic fields, though today contemporary methods utilize such approaches as semantic primes,[120] such as "The Lexical Semantics of *Culture*" and "The Lexical Semantics of *Language*," both studies completed by Cliff Goddard in 2005 and 2011 respectively. This study will adopt the more simplistic model of Trier and his hypothesis that "words should not be considered in isolation, but in their relationship to semantically related words"[121] because the focus of this study is limited to tracking 1) the usage history *shit* in its semantic field, which will be defined as the semantic field of *excrement*, and 2) the emotive changes of this word through time, which in itself reveals much information about usage and society's relationship to taboo terminology. As such, the history *shit* will

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[119] DGeeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 12.
[120] This refers to "the natural semantic metalanguage (NSM) approach originated by Anna Wierzbicka," Cliff Goddard, "The Lexical Semantics of *Culture*," *Language Sciences* 27 (2005): 51-73 at 51.
[121] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 54.

not only be tracked etymologically to understand its specific changes, but also within its semantic field in looking at its relationships with other semantically related co-occurring words.

Data will be gathered from corpora, historical texts, and dictionaries to look at their social acceptability, as books have societal ownership and reinforce prescriptive rules societies agree on as a whole, revealing particular changes in societal attitudes. It is true that pragmatic data from informants is very valuable and speak to how words are used in spoken speech, and a few have undertaken such studies to describe spoken usage of taboo words.[122] However, it is erroneous to dismiss etymological and semantic field insights because this data helps to create a more accurate, multi-faceted picture of taboo terminology usage and should be examined in conjunction with pragmatic data.

[122] See Jay, *Cursing in America*.

CHAPTER 2 SEMANTIC SHIFT OF *SHIT*

2.1 Structure

The following will delve into the history of *shit's* semantic field, first presenting the data regarding the semantic shifts of the field from Old English (OE) through Early Modern English (EME). Thereafter, contemporary data and attitudes will be analyzed. Discussion of data and historical attitudes towards the semantic field of *excrement* will be discussed in chapter 3, focusing on the historical attitudes towards the term *shit* in particular.

2.2 Historical *Shit*

2.2.1 Old English Scatological Terminology

2.2.1.1 Terms

As in many languages, one of the notable characteristics of OE is that it had a specialized vocabulary, which essentially means that there were specialized terms referring to very specific phenomena. An example of this is the many OE terms for "army," *here* referring to Viking armies specifically and *fyrd* referring to English armies specifically.[123] This all means that there is a high probability that any particular semantic field would have multiple terms referring to the same phenomena, and we define the OE

[123] Though this occasionally does vary in poetic usage.

as the English language spoken from approximately the 5th century to the 11th century.[124] In order to locate the terms falling under the semantic fields of excrement and excrement verbs, *Dictionary of Old English Corpus*, Joseph Bosworth's *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, and Jane Roberts, Christian Kay, and Lynne Grundy's *Thesaurus of Old English* were consulted. Further, it was necessary to establish the parameters of the field(s), so the terms included in the semantic field were chosen because they relate specifically to defecation, a specialized type of defecation, or the act of defecation; terms related only to disease, such as dysentery, were not included because their semantic field encompasses disease rather than just fecal matter, whereas fecal matter may come in many different shapes but is not necessarily always a symptom of a disease. As such, 21 terms meaning "feces" and 3 terms meaning "to defecate" were discovered, which is illustrated in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1. OE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement[125]

OE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement	
Terms	Meaning
cwead	feces; dung, filth, odure; stercus
dinig	dung; fimus
driting	feces; defecation; the voiding of excrement
droge	feces; dung, draugh, stercus
dung*	dung; to manure, dung; prison, confinement, durance; fimus, stercus
dyncge*	feces; dung, manure, litter; manured land; arable/ploughed land
earsgang*	intestines; feces; a privy; defecation; anus[126]

[124] David Denison and Richard Hogg, "Overview," *A History of the English Language*, eds. Richard Hogg and David Denison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1-42 at 2.
[125] Terms and definitions were gathered from Jane Roberts, Christian Kay, and Lynne Grundy, *A Thesaurus of Old English,* 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2000), 63, 127, 210 and Joseph Bosworth, *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, ed. T. Northcote Toller (1898; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972). Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.
[126] Roberts, Kay, and Grundy gloss this as "feces," but Bosworth glosses this as "anus" in his *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, which is the same for William Somner's *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum* as well. See Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 235; see also William Somner, *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-*

Table 1. continued.

gor	feces; thickness, viscoscity; foul, filthy, squalid; dung, dirt; fimus, lutum coenum; pulp
meox*	feces; to manure, dung; muck, dung, ordure, dirt; manure
mesa127	feces; cow's dung
mixen*	feces; to manure, dung; a mixen, dung-heap, dung
mixendynge*	feces; dung from a mixen
scearn*	feces; sharn, dung, filth
scitte*	disease of bowels; (of cattle) seized with disease; diarrhea; looseness of the bowels
scytel	feces; dung
tord*	feces; foul, filthy, squalid; a turd, dung
tyrd(e)lu	feces; treddles
þost	feces; dung, odure
utgang*	intestines; discharge, emanation; feces; a privy; a means of access; to come/go out from; permission exitus, finis, effectus, terminus, egressus; a going out of a place; a coming out from a position within a body; in reference to time, the going out of a period, the conclusion, end; a place by which anything comes out, an exit, passage; what comes out of a body, an evacuation
utsiht(e)*	disease of bowels; diarrhea; dysentery
utsihtadl*	disease of bowels; diarrhea; dysentery

Table 2. OE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs[128]

OE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs	
Terms	Meaning
gedritan	feces; to defecate; to drop excrement
ut(ge)gan	to defecate
ut gangan	to defecate

It is important to note that of the words listed in Tables 1 and 2, a few are polysemic and have meanings beyond the semantic field of *excrement* to a semantically

Anglicum, ed. R. C. Altson, English Linguistics 1500 – 1800 247 (1659; repr. Menston, UK: The Scolar Press Limited, 1970).

[127] This is feminine plural; it does not exist in the singular.

[128] Terms and definitions were gathered from Roberts, Kay, and Grundy, *Thesaurus of Old English* and Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.

related field, such as *utgang* and "privy" or *mixen* and "to dung," or rather to spread manure over land intended for farming.[129] This indicates that the language had already experienced semantic change as these terms generalized or specialized. Furthermore, a few terms have specialized meanings in the semantic field of *excrement* in that they refer to a specific type of excrement, i.e. "diarrhea" rather than "feces" in general. It is possible that these terms referred to excrement in general and later specialized, but further research would need to be conducted on the prehistory of these words in order to describe its semantic pre-history.

Lastly and most interesting, Roberts, Kay and Grundy state that of the polysemous terms, *tord* and *gor* were also used as euphemisms for foulness,[130] which illustrates negative connotations associated with the semantic field of *excrement*, but does not necessarily mean that the field as a whole held the kind of taboo it does today: as aforementioned, fecal matter was a frequent ingredient in medicinal remedies, which would seem to indicate that defecation and excrement were not considered as disgusting by society as they are today. It would seem, then, that these terms were not as yet considered taboo language, nor was this necessarily a taboo topic.

2.2.1.2 Usage

Regarding usage of the listed terms, Table 3 illustrates the genres in which these terms occurred and the number of times they occurred in *The Dictionary of Old English*

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[129] Roberts, Kay, and Grundy, *Thesaurus of Old English*, 1: 210.
[130] Examples of this were not found. Further research is needed to verify this usage.

Corpus.[131] As is evident, many of them appear in medical treatises—unsurprising as at the time fecal matter was used in medicine to treat various ailments and diseases. However, it is also evident that these terms were not limited to medical texts and appeared in a range of genres, including law, books of history, and texts meant to teach students Latin.

Also apparent is that the most used term was *meox*, followed closely by *utsihte*, *scearn, tord,* and *mixen*; *scitte's* usage rate is very low, which is interesting considering its current popularity. Roberts, Kay, and Grundy further state that *droge*, *mesa*, *mixendynge*, *scytel*, *gedrī an*, and *dung* were used infrequently and that *dung*[132] and *drī ing* appear mostly in glossaries,[133] which may indicate that these forms were archaic or unpopular—although most of these "uncommon" terms appear in Bald's *Leechbook*, "the oldest Saxon" medical treatise on "the virtues of herbs," which dates from approximately 900 – 950CE.[134] This could indicate that the aforementioned terms are then specialized terms used mostly in the medical field. However, it is difficult to determine whether the usage is related to register or popularity as the data is scarce and covers a range of hundreds of years, and the language would have changed during that time period, especially the popularity of terms, which we know from looking at the fluctuation of popularity in term usage today. Further, this data reflects the written usages

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[131] "The [Dictionary of Old English] is based on a computerized Corpus comprising at least one copy of each text surviving in Old English," Roy M. Liuzza, et. al., "About the Dictionary of Old English," *The Dictionary of Old English*, last modified October 31, 2011. http://doe.utoronto.ca/pages/about.html
[132] *Dung* was found in the Book of Luke in the Bible.
[133] Roberts, Kay, and Grundy, *Thesaurus of Old English*, 1: xxi, 63, 210.
[134] Eleanour Sinclair Rohde, *The Old English Herbals* (1922; repr., London: Minerva Press Limited, 1974), 5.

of these terms, and the spoken usage was likely very different; however, the conclusion we can reach is given that these terms appear across all genres for all different kinds of audiences, it is unlikely that any sort of taboo existed on fecal matter.

Table 3. OE Excrement Terms: Genre Analysis[135]

OE Excrement Terms: Genre Analysis		
Terms	Corpus Instances	Genre
cwēad	9	Glossary, Medical text
dinig	1	Glossary
gedrīt n	1	Medical text
drīti g	1	Glossary
droge	1	Medical text
dung	1	Religious text
gor	9	Glossary, Literature, Medical text
meox[136]	40	Glossary, Law, Religious text, letters
mesa	1	Medical text
mixen	22	Glossary, Law, Medical text, Religious text
mixendynge	1	Law
scearn	26	Academic text, Glossary, Law, Medical text, Religious text
scitte	2	Medical text
scytel	2	Glossary, Medical text
tord	24	Glossary, Law, Medical text, Recipes
tyrd(e)lu	2	Medical text
þost	5	Medical text
ūts ht(e)	37	Chronicle, Glossary, Medical text, Religious text
ūts htād	3	Medical text

[135] *Dyncge, earsgang,* and *utgang,* were not included in this analysis due to their polysemic status, as more in-depth research is required to determine in which instance it is used to mean *excrement* and it was not possible to access all texts required for analysis. This is suggested for future research. However, *dung* was included as the only instance found meaning *excrement. Mixen* was also included as it means both excrement and a mound composed of excrement. With regard to genre, virtually all of the surviving texts are from formal registers (i.e. religious, historical, medical, scientific texts, etc.) and have little to say about vernacular speech.

[136] *Meox* may be the equivalent of "excrement," which is almost never heard in colloquial English, although it does appear in a letter from the monk Aelfric to a relative, which contains a complaint about women eating and drinking while defecating, which is where *meox* is used. See Mary Clayton, "Letter to Brother Edward: A Student Edition," *Old English Newsletter* 40.3 (Spring 2007): 31-46 at 32, 42; and Aaron J. Kleist, "Assembling Ælfric: Reconstructing the Rationale Behind Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century Compilations," *A Companion to Ælfric*, ed. Hugh Magennis and Mary Swan, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 18 (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2009), 369-98 at 383-84.

In analyzing the particular texts, there doesn't seem to be a pattern of usage for particular referents besides the term *þost* referring exclusively to "hound excrement" in both Bald's *Leechbook* and the *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, the latter being a composite text also dealing with medicine[137] and the main MS (i.e. Cotton Viellius C III) of which dates to approximately 1050CE (This usage is illustrated in Table 4).[138] In addition, *mesa* appears to refer exclusively the cow excrement, but this is suspect as other terms also refer to bovine excrement, such as *scearn, gor,* and *scytel* (Examples appear in Tables 5 and 6).[139] This differs from the usage data of *utgang*, *utsihte*, and *droge*, which in the aforementioned texts referred to human excrement exclusively (Examples appear in Tables 7 and 8). However, *cwead* is used to refer to both human and animal excrement, which is illustrated in Tables 9 and 10. This data appears to illustrate term usage trends in herbal medical texts, but further investigation is needed to analyze usage trends beyond this particular genre. For the Tables, the OE transcription appears above the PDE gloss, and a PDE translation appears at the bottom.

Table 4. Example from *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, approximately 1050CE.[140]

OE:	*Scinseocum*	*men*	*wyrc*	*drenc*
PDE:	haunted by apparitions(DAT)	man(DAT)	make(IMP Sg.)	drink
	of	*hwites*	*hundes*	***þoste***
	of	white(POSS)	hound(POSS)	dung
	on	*bitere*	*lege,*	*wundorlice*
	in	bitter(DAT)	lye(DAT)	wonderfully

[137] Hubert Jan de Vriend, ed., *The Old English Herbarium and Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, Early English Text Society, Original Series 286 (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), lxii-lxvii.
[138] Oswald Cockayne, ed., *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England: Being a Collection of Documents, for the Most Part Never before Printed, Illustrating the History of Science in this Country before the Norman Conquest*, 3 vols., Rerum Britannicarum Medii Ævi Scriptores 35 (1864-1866; repr., Wiesbaden: Kraus Reprint, 1965), 1: lxxv.
[139] *Scytel* is discussed in-depth below.
[140] de Vriend, *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, 264, lines 29-30.

Table 4. continued.

	hyt it	*hæleþ* heal(3rd per. Pres. Sg.)
"For a man haunted by apparitions, work a drink of a white hound's **dung** in a bitter mixture of ashes and water; wonderfully it heals."		

Table 5. Example from *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, approximately 1050CE.[141]

OE: PDE:	*Wiþ* with	*Bryce* fracture(ACC)	*fearres* bull(POSS)	***gor*** dung
	wearm warm	*lege* lay(IMP Sg.)	*on* on	*þone* the(ACC)
	Bryce, fracture(ACC)	*syþþan* afterwards	*him* him(DAT)	*bið* is(3rd per. Pres. Sg)
	sel. better			
"For a fracture of the limb, lay warm bull's **dung** on the fracture; afterwards it will be better for him."				

Table 6. Example from Bald's *Leechbook*, approximately 900 – 950CE.[142]

OE: PDE:	*ȝesomna* collect(IMP Sg.)	*cue* cow(POSS)	***mesa*** feces	*cu* cow
	miȝoþa urine	*ȝepyrce* work(IMP Sg.)	*to* to	*flynan* paste
	þa then	*spa* as	*mon* man	*sapan* soap
	pyrcð work(3rd per. Pres. Sg.)	*micelne* great	*citel* kettle	*fulne* full
"Collect cow **dung**, cow urine, make a paste, just as one makes soap, a large kettle full."				

Table 7. Example from *Bald's Leechbook*, approximately 900 – 950CE.[143]

OE: PDE:	*ȝif* if	*hit* it	*nelle* will(NEG)	ꝥ[144] that
	nim take(IMP Sg.)	*monnes* man(POSS)	***drogan*** dung	*driȝ* dry(IMP Sg.)
	spiðe exceedingly	*ȝnid* rub(IMP Sg.)	*to* to	*duste* dust
	do put(2nd per. SUBJ)	*on* on		

[141] de Vriend, *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, 268, lines 20-21.
[142] Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft*, 2:98-99.
[143] Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft*, 2:328-29.
[144] See List of Symbols, p. 163.

Table 7. continued.

"If it [i.e. cancer] will not respond to that [i.e. the previous remedy], take a man's **dung**, dry it thoroughly, rub it to dust, apply it."

Table 8. Example from *Bald's Leechbook*, approximately 900 – 950CE.[145]

OE:	*ȝif*	*men*	*sie*	*se*
PDE:	if	man(DAT)	be(SUBJ Pres. Sg.)	the
	utgang	*forseten*	*pyl*	*permod*
	excretion	obstruct(SUBJ. Pret. Pl.)	boil(IMP Sg.)	wormwood
	on	*surum*	*ealaþ*	⁊[146]
	in	sour(DAT)	ale	and
	do	*buteran*	*þær*	*to*
	put(IMP. Sg.)	butter	there	to
	him	*biþ*	*sona*	*sel*
	him(DAT)	is(3rd per. Pres. Sg.)	soon	better
	ȝif	*he*	*hit*	*drincþ*
	if	he	it	drink(3rd per. Pres. Sg.)
"If a man's **dung** be obstructed, boil wormwood in sour ale and add butter thereto, it will soon be better with him if he drinks it."				

Table 9. Example from *Bald's Leechbook*, approximately 900 – 950CE.[147]

OE:	*Þiþ*	*deappyrme*	*sume*	*nimað*
PDE:	for	ringworm	some	take(3rd per. Pres. Pl)
	pearm	***cpead***	*monnes*	*þynne*
	warm	dung	man(POSS)	thin
	bindað	*neahterne*	*on*	*sume*
	bind(3rd per. Pres. Pl)	for a night	on	some
	spines	*lunȝenne*	*pearme*	
	swine(POSS)	lung	warm	
"For a ringworm, some take warm, thin **dung** of a man and bind it on for a night; some [take] a swine's warm lung."				

Table 10. Example from *Bald's Leechbook,* approximately 900 – 950CE.[148]

OE:	*Eft*	*eoforspines*	***cpead***	ꝥ
PDE:	Again	boar swine(POSS)	dung	that

[145] Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft*, 2: 320-21.
[146] See List of Symbols, p. 163.
[147] Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft*, 2: 124-25.
[148] Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft*, 2: 262-63.

Table 10. continued.

	mon man	*fint* find(3rd per. Pres. Sg.)	*on* in	*puda* woods
	ȝemylte soften(IMP Sg.)	*on* in	*pætre* water	*aseoh* strain(IMP Sg.)
	do put(IMP Sg.)	*on* in	*hir* his	*drincan* drink
"Again soften in water the **dung** of a boar swine which one finds in the woods, strain it out, put it in his drink."				

Looking at *scitte* (also *scitta, scittan, scytole, scitole, scytel*)[149] in particular, it appears that these words seem to have had the specialized meaning of diarrhea, though it was also used to refer in general to excrement or dung, in which case *-el*/*-ol*[150] was frequently attached to the verbal stem to form nouns;[151] examples of both *scittan* and *scytel* are illustrated in Tables 11 and 12. As illustrated, *scitel* and *scittan* referred solely to excretions from the bowels, and from their usage, As illustrated, *scitel* and *scittan* referred solely to excretions from the bowels, and from their limited usage, it appears that these terms were not very popular and only appeared in medical texts, which may indicate register.

Table 11. Example from *Bald's Leechbook,* approximately 900 – 950CE.[152]

OE: PDE:	*ƿiþ* for	*þon* then	*þe* when	*men* man(DAT)
	mete food(NOM)	*untela* not well	*melte* digest(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	⁊ and
	ȝecirre turns(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	*on* into	*yfele* evil	*pætan* humour

[149] Some examples taken from the Oxford English Dictionary, *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* 3rd ed., s.v. "shit, n. and adj."
[150] When appearing with an *–ol* suffix, the term seems to have been used to refer to "purgatives," or rather something to induce a bowel movement, not to excrement. See Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft*, 2: 178-79.
[151] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2nd ed., s.v. "-el, suffix."
[152] Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft*, 2: 226-27.

Table 11. continued.

	⁊ and	***scittan*** diarrhea	*þam* those(DAT)	*monnum* men(DAT)
	deah is good(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	*ƿ* that	*hie* they	*spipen* spew(3rd per. Pres. Pl)
"For then when the food digests badly in a man and turns into evil humour and **diarrhea**, it is good for those men that they vomit."				

Table 12. Example from *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, approximately 1050CE.[153]

OE:	*Wiþ*	þæt	*ilce*	*nim*
PDE:	With	that	same	take(IMP Sg.)
	heortes deer(GEN)	***scytel*** dung	⁊ and	*cnoca* pound(IMP Sg.)
	to to	*duste,* powder	*do* put(IMP Sg.)	*on* in
	wines wine(GEN)	*drync,* drink	*hit* it	*hælæð* heal(3rd per. Pres. Sg)
	þæt that	*ilce.* same		
"For that same [problem], take the **dung** of a deer and pound it to powder, put it in a drink of wine, it heals that same [issue]."				

2.2.1.3 Comparative Model

In order to analyze usage changes from OE to PDE, it is necessary to have a control text, which has been rewritten in each stage of the language. As such, passages were identified in in the Book of Luke and the Book of Exodus in the bible that utilize terms for *excrement*. For the Book of Exodus, S. J. Crawford's *The Old English Heptateuch* was consulted; the term "Heptateuch" is used to "denote the Pentateuch [i.e. the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy translated together into OE] together with the books of Joshua and Judges."[154] This text was transcribed

[153] de Vriend, *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*, 242, lines 24-25.
[154] S.J. Crawford and N. R. Ker, eds., *The Old English Version of the Heptateuch, Ælfric's Treatise on the Old and New Testament and his Preface to Genesis*, Early English Text Society, Original Series 160 (1922; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 1.

primarily from the British Museum MS Cotton Claudius B IV,[155] written in the 11th century[156] in the Late West Saxon dialect,[157] because it is considered the most complete of all extant MSS, and the transcription was further "collated with all the other existing manuscripts and fragments" of these books to illustrate deviation from this MS.[158] Table 13 illustrates the use of *gor* in Exodus 29:14.

Table 13. Example from Exodus 29:14, Late West Saxon Dialect, approximately 11th century.[159]

MS		Text
1	British Museum MS Cotton Claudius B IV.	*Þaes cealfes flæsc ⁊ fell ⁊* ***gor****, þu bærnst ute butan þam fyrdwicon, for ðam hit is for synne.*
	PDE Translation:	"The calf's flesh and skin and **dung**, you burn outside without the camp, because it is [an offering] for sin."

For the Book of Luke, Walter W. Skeat's *The Holy Gospels: In Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions* was consulted because it is an ideal edition for "comparative philology,"[160] as he included transcriptions from the Corpus MS No. CXL, the Cambridge MS Ii. 2. 11, the Bodley 441, the Cotton MS Otho C. 1, Hatton MS 38, the Royal MS Bibl. Reg. 1 A. xiv, the Cotton MS Nero D. 4, and the Auct. MS D. ii. 19 for side-by-side comparisons. Skeat states that the Corpus MS dates to approximately 1000CE,[161] the Cambridge MS to 1050CE,[162] the Cotton Nero MS to 950CE,[163] and the

[155] Crawford and Ker, *Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, vii.
[156] Crawford and Ker, *Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, 2.
[157] Crawford and Ker, *Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, 10.
[158] Crawford and Ker, *Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, vii.
[159] Crawford and Ker, *Old English Version of the Heptateuch*, 273.
[160] Roy M. Liuzza, ed., *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, 2 vols., Early English Text Society Original Series no. 304, 314 (Oxford: Oxford University, 1994-2000), 1: xv.
[161] Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* in *The Holy Gospels: In Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887), vi.
[162] Skeat, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, vii.
[163] Skeat, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, xi.

Auct. to approximately the 8th century.[164] The other MSS were not dated in this text, but Skeat states that the Bodley MS has an "extremely close connection with the Corpus and Cotton [Otho] MSS, and renders it absolutely certain that these three MSS. are copies from a common original," suggesting that the Bodley MS and the Cotton MS Otho may have been copied around 1000CE. The Hatton MS and the Royal MS are also closely related in that the scribe who copied the Hatton MS probably consulted the Royal MS;[165] however the Royal MS is "somewhat older than the Hatton MS., and was probably written in the time of [King] Stephen," with is approximately the 12th century,[166] and the Hatton appears to be from a later period as it illustrates "how the language began to lose strength in its inflectional forms."[167] The passage (Luke 13:8) is illustrated in Table 14 below. It should be noted that No. 4 and 5 in the table are from the Northumbrian dialect, whereas the others are West-Saxon,[168] which means that the spelling is noticeably different as words were written how they were pronounced at that time in each dialect, having no standardized system. Furthermore, it is also apparent that the scribal translations of Luke are vastly different when comparing No. 1-3 vs. No. 4-5, which was not uncommon at the time.

[164] Skeat, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, xii.
[165] Skeat, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, x.
[166] Skeat, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, x.
[167] Skeat, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, x.
[168] Skeat, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, xxvii.

Table 14. Example from Luke 13:8, West Saxon and Northumbrian Dialects, approximately 8th – 11th centuries.[169]

MSS		Text
1	Corpus MS No. CXL	*Ða cwæð he hlaford. læt hine gyt þis gear. oð ic hine bedelfe ┐ ic hine bewurpe mid* ***meoxe***.[170]
2	Hatton MS 38	*Ða cwæð he. hlaford læt hine geat þis gear oð Ic hine be-delfe. ┐ ic hine beweorpe mid* ***dunge***.
3	Royal MS Bibl. Reg. 1 A. xiv	***meoxe*** *[for dunge]*
4	Cotton MS Nero D. 4	*soð he onduarde cuoeð to ðæm ł*[171] *him drihten forlet hia ┐ ł æc ðios ger wiðꝑ mið-ðy ic delfo ymb hia ┐ ic sendo* ***micxseno***
5	Auct. MS D. ii. 19	*soð he ond-worde cwæð to ðæm drihten forlet ða ł hiæ ┐ ec ðis ger wiððæt miððy ic delfo ymb ðailca ┐ ic sendo* ***mixenne***
PDE Translation (No. 1-3):		"Then said he, 'Lord, leave it yet this year. Until I dig around it and I spread it about with **dung**.'"
PDE Translation (No. 4-5):		"Truly, he answered. Said to them *or* him, 'Lord, allow it and *or* because this year I will dig continually all the time around it and apply **dung**.'"

2.2.2 Middle English *Skit*

2.2.2.1 Historical Context: Effects of Invasion

Before delving into the semantic history of excrement in ME, defined as English spoken from approximately the 12th century to the 15th century,[172] it is necessary to describe the sociocultural climate of the time to give context for the language change. To begin, the history of the British Isles is one of repeated invasion from many different

[169] Walter W. Skeat, ed., *The Gospel according to Saint Luke* in *The Holy Gospels: In Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1887), 138-39.
[170] For this transcription, see also Liuzza, *The Old English Version of the Gospels*, 1: 131.
[171] See List of Symbols, p. 163.
[172] Denison and Hogg, "Overview," 2.

peoples: Romans, Germanic tribes, Scandinavians, and Normans. With regard to language change and influence, the most important invasions and cultural contacts come from the Scandinavians and the Normans. The Scandinavians continually invaded the British Isles throughout the Celtic inhabitation, Roman occupation, and Anglophonic colonization. These Vikings "settled in greatest numbers in the area known as the Danelaw, which is the part of England that was ruled from Denmark in the ninth century," and the area was basically comprised of Northumbria, East Anglia, the northeastern part of the Midlands (i.e. Mercia), and the "south-east Midlands."[173] This contact was characterized by "piracy" and "military campaigns," and at one point, "one after another [of] the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were overturned, until Wessex was the only source of English resistance," though this was mostly undone by King Alfred, and later by his sons "Edward and Athelstan" in the 10th century. [174]

As one might expect, the Scandinavians most heavily influenced the culture and language in the northern and eastern part of England, which means that the "original contact between the two languages…brought Scandinavian features into the English of the Danelaw," which was later "spread within English by means of interdialectal contact."[175] Although their linguistic influence on English was not drastic, the lexical items and phonology nativized from Old Norse are integral to Present-Day English

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[173] Laura Wright, "The Languages of Medieval Britain," *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture*, ed. Peter Brown, Blackwell Companions to Literature and Culture (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 143-58 at 144.
[174] Dick Leith, *A Social History of English*, 2nd ed. Language and Society Series (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1983), 22.
[175] Denison and Hogg, "Overview," 15.

(PDE).[176] Still, the Scandinavians may not have influenced the language or culture of the Anglo-Saxon people as much as the Normans after their conquest of England in 1066CE.[177]

After the conquest, there was a comprehensive replacement of the clergy and aristocracy with Normans. This restructuring and subjugation of the English people resulted in the usage of French (or rather Anglo-Norman) as the language of the court at least "until the end of the twelfth century";[178] however because the Normans did not have a literary tradition at this time, the law, theological documents, and literature were written in Latin, as was common on the Continent.[179] This means that "English ceased to be the written language of the government" and "the use of English [also] sharply declined for literary purposes."[180] However, although there were intermarriages "amongst the landowning classes" resulting in some degree of bilingualism,[181] and the intense subjugation of English lessened over the years, "for the population at large English remained a largely oral language" [182] and did not transcend into the secular or religious domains during the 11th and 12th centuries, and most of the 13th and 14th centuries.

It was also during the early part of the 13th century that French began to be highly valued by the English people as "by 1200 every educated man needed to know French" because knowing French had social implications in social barrier transcendence and

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[176] Lexical examples: Sky, eggs, anger, call, etc.; Phonological examples: 'land' instead of 'lond,' they/their/them instead of hie/hiere/hem, etc.
[177] However, this is debatable because there are numerous syntactic patterns attributed to ON.
[178] Denison and Hogg, "Overview," 15.
[179] M.T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066 – 1272: Foreign Lordship and National Identity* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes and Noble Books, 1983), 60.
[180] Clanchy, *England and its Rulers,* 49-50, 58.
[181] Denison and Hogg, "Overview," 14.
[182] Tim William Machan, *English in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 74.

guaranteed access to a greater pool of financial and social opportunities. [183] Furthermore by this time, "the [English] court [eventually] became associated with Paris and Orleans," which meant that Parisian French was the language of the English court, which helped promote language contact between English and Parisian French. However, this had further social implications because this also meant that "wherever something like a distinctly courtly environment grew up in England, it was very dependent on French models, an off-shoot of French ideas of chivalry, French even in language, and lacking native strength and individuality."[184] This meant that England's aristocracy and middle class were very much influenced by ideas of courtly love and chivalry coming from the French court, which in turn affected their social values and the prestige of the French language. Most importantly, it was also during this time that France developed an extensive literary tradition, which in turn influenced many authors and scribes in England as many of the important medieval works of the French cannon were copied in England during this time.[185] These factors combined provided an ideal environment for language contact between French and English speakers.

It is important to note that as a result of constant contact with French, English underwent vast changes during this time, beyond language borrowing.[186] Grammatical case and gender were eventually dropped from the language,[187] English acquired

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[183] Clanchy, *England and its Rulers*, 60.
[184] Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, Reissue ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Limited, 2011), 2.
[185] Examples: *Song of Roland* and Marie de France's Breton Lais.
[186] The language was already undergoing changes before 1066CE, such as losing inflectional endings, but French still heavily influenced the trajectory of language change in the history of the English language.
[187] Except for 'he' and 'she,' which changed to correspond to physical gender. However, we still see some gendering with nouns inherited from Old English, such as referring to a boat or ship as 'she,' which is a

syntactical[188] and orthographic[189] forms from Anglo-Norman, and there was a vast influx in the lexicon.[190] Unlike Scandinavian influence, which was primarily geographical, "the variables which [affected] English in respect [to] French are far more to do with a contrast between types of social language," or rather register, which means that "if a text was [concerned] with…religion or science, or it [was] a formal piece, then it is probable that it [contained] a higher proportion of French loanwords than a text which [was] purely secular or colloquial."[191] This means that because of the prestige assigned to French language and culture, the French literary tradition was adopted and incorporated into the few works written during the earlier centuries, but this process saw its heyday most heavily and notably in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This is particularly significant because many still felt that English "lacked the finesse in polite discourse of French and the abstract and conceptualizing vocabulary of Latin";[192] instead, it was described as vulgar or "rude"[193] as compared to the 'superiority' of French and Latin, and some authors even began their work with an apology for the "rudeness" or

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common 'native' Anglophonic cultural practice. Although the form has stayed, the rationale behind the form has fallen away from conscious cultural memory.

[188] Example: A move towards a noun modifying the noun immediately following, probably influenced by the OF construction ___ of ___. Sign **of** the cross/signe **de** la croix.

[189] Examples: OE [c] was realized phonologically as /ʧ/ and /k/, but this difference was not indicated in the orthography. As a result of French scribes (the clergy were the scribes until professional scribes developed in the fourteenth century), OE [c] realized as /ʧ/ was written as [ch] and OE /k/ was written either as [c] or [k]. OE [cw], as in 'cwene,' was changed to OF [qu], as in 'quene,' Modern English 'queen.'

[190] Most notably in the areas of law and food (i.e. beef vs. cow: most likely because the English raised the food and the French ate the food); English drew from many other registers of French as well.

[191] Denison and Hogg, "Overview," 15.

[192] Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 73.

[193] In Middle English (ME), "rude" meant "lacking in refinement, uncouth, ill-bred" as it pertained to language. *Middle English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "rude, adj."

"lewedness"[194] of the English language,[195] although they still wrote in English because it was their "mother-tongue, [which had] more immediate access to the deeper well-springs of emotional experience."[196]

The salient point of the forgoing discussion is that the result of the conquest, the ruling of England by French aristocracy, and the subsequent prestige of the French language resulted in extensive language borrowing from French. In addition, language contact with Scandinavians and ON resulted in further language borrowing, which percolated into the language over the centuries as people began to migrate south to London because it was "commercially the most important [city] in England" and the hub of culture, learning, and commerce.[197] This is incidentally where the ancestor dialect to PDE was located, i.e. the East Midlands dialect, and where most of the books were printed after the printing press was invented, which will be discussed in the next section. Returning to the point, the reason why so many words entered into the language, and why so many words were added into the semantic field of *excrement*, was because of language contact and sociocultural factors related to that contact. This, however, does not mean that the semantic field of *excrement* was considered a taboo topic during this time or that the extensive expansion of the field was the result of euphemism and circumlocution. In

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[194] In ME, "leued" or "lewed" ([w] was sometimes realized orthographically as [u]) meant "uneducated, ignorant, rough, crude, ugly," etc. *Middle English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "leued."
[195] See works by Geoffrey Chaucer, Thomas Usk, John Walton, John Metham, George Ashby, etc. See Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Ruth Evans, and Andrew Taylor, eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (Exeter, UK: University of Exeter Press, 1999), 8.
[196] Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994), 73.
[197] Denison and Hogg, "Overview," 18.

fact, as will become apparent, the semantic field was frequently borrowed from for creativity in description and insults.

2.2.2.2 Terms

As demonstrated, Middle English (ME) was a transitional period for the history of the English language in which the language underwent drastic changes, least of which was semantic shift. Unsurprisingly, the semantic field of *excrement* also experienced semantic shift: losing terms, adding new words, and changing meanings of existing words. Table 15 is a translation of the terms from OE to ME, Tables 16 and 17 illustrate the terms encompassed in the semantic field of *excrement* and excrement verbs during the ME period, and Table 18 lists the terms whose meanings shifted away from the semantic field into an alternate field.

Table 15. OE to ME Orthographic Translation.

OE to ME Translation	
OE	ME
cwead	quede
gedritan	driten
dunge	donge
gor	gor
meox	mix
mixen	mixen
scearn	sharn
scitte	shit
scytel	shitel
tord	tord
tyrd(e)lu	tirdel
þost	thost
utsiht(e)	outsight

Table 16. ME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement.[198]

ME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement		
Language of Origin	Terms	Meaning
OE	adeleth	excrement
AF	croteis	excrement in pellets
AF	crotinge	excrement in the shape of pellets
L	defiing*	the voiding of excrement
ML	diaria	diarrhea
L & OF	digestioun*	the waste matter of the animal digestive process, excrement, feces
OE	donge*	barnyard manure; a mixture of dung, straw, etc., used for fertilizer; manure piles, dung-heaps; excrement, droppings; contents of the intestines, droppings used medicinally; applied to that which is morally filthy or defiling, or to matter that is vile, contemptible, or loathsome
ME	dong-hep*	a pile of manure, a dunghill, a pile of refuse or trash; a vile thing, a stinking mess
OE	drast*	the worst or poorest of anything; waste products of digestion, fecal matter
ON	dreg*	feces, excrement
ON	drit*	excrement, droppings; dung; feces; the dung of certain animals; something worthless or degrading; worldly possessions, filthy lucre; something vile or sinful; a worthless fellow; one who hauls or spreads dung; the Devil's filth
OE	driten	defecation or excrement
OE	droppinge*	droppings, excrement
L & OF	egestioun*	elimination, evacuation of the bowels; feces, dung
OF	esement*	relief of the body by evacuation, excrement, to relieve the bowels
OF & L	fece*	excrement
OF	fen*	dung, excrement

[198] Terms and definitions were gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed.; *The Oxford English Dictionary: Historical Thesaurus*; *The Middle English Dictionary*; and Thomas W. Ross, *Chaucer's Bawdy* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1972). Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.

Table 16. continued.

OI	file*	a worthless person, a base fellow, a wretch or rascal; a worthless woman, a wench; excrement
OE	filth*	anything material that is considered foul, unclean, impure, or defiling; natural discharges of the body of man or beast: excrement
OE	filthhede*	filthy matter, esp. excrement, dung; corruption, sinfulness, wickedness, anything that corrupts, gives offence, or leads to sinful desires or acts
OF	fime*	the excrement of certain game animals, such as deer; excrement, dung
OF	flux*	diarrhea; flow of excrement produced by medicine, purging
OF	fruit* of the womb	euphemism for excrement
OF	fumes	excrement, dung (of a game animal, specifically of the hart)
OE	gore*	dung, filth; mud, mire; moral filth; as a term of reproach, a vile or worthless person
OF	grotes	excrement in pellets
OF	lesses	the dung of certain animals, as of the wild board and wolf
L	lienteria	diarrhea
OF	menisoun*	looseness of the bowels, an evacuation
OF	merde	dung, excrement, a piece of excrement, a turd
ON	midding*	a dunghill, manure pile; as a type of something vile
ON	mire*	a pile of filth or dung
OE	mix*	filth, dung, dust; a wretched or lowly condition; that which is foul our wicked; a vile person, wretch, fool; vile, foul
OE	mixen*	dung-hill; a pile of refuse; as a term of abuse, a foul creature
ON	mork	dung, muck
MLG	mudding	dung heap
ON	muk*	animal or human excrement; dung; manure; property, possessions, wealth, worldly gain
OF	mute	feces or excrement of a hawk
ME	mutesing	of a hawk: voiding of excrement

Table 16. continued.

ME	muting	of a hawk: voiding of excrement
AN	office*	the function or action of defecating or urinating, excretion
OF	ordure*	excrement, dung, a piece of excrement; moral filth, sin, an instance or kind of moral filth
ME	outpassinge*	purgation (of feces)
OE	outsight	diarrhea
OE	overshet	covered with excrement
OF	purgacioun*	evacuation of the bowels, excretion
OF	segge*	evacuation of the bowels or bladder
OE	sharn	dung, manure
OE	shete	a layer of dung
OE	shit*	diarrhea; an obscene term of abuse
OE	shitel	dung, excrement
ME	shitinge	the act of defecation; feces
ON	skit*	diarrhea
ME	skiterande*	defecating; used as a term of abuse
OF	spraintes	otter droppings
ME	spraintinge	otter dung
AL	squiballes	hard excrement
MDu or MLG	squirte*	diarrhea
L	stercories	pieces of dung
OE	stink*	that which emits an offensive odor: dung, muck, foul water, etc.; an epithet for hell personified
L	subduccioun	the act or action of withdrawing noxious substances from the body, esp. excrement
OE	thost*	a piece of dung, excrement, fecal matter; filth; a piece of dung used medicinally; something of no value
OE	tirdel	a pellet of dung of an animal, either domesticated or wild
OE	tirdeling	a mass of pellets of dung of an animal
OE	tord*	excrement, dung; a piece of dung, of feces, or of bird dropping, manure used as fertilizer or fuel; animal dung or droppings of a bird, fowl, etc. used medicinally; something that is worthless, a worthless or worldly activity; as a term of abuse; also an abusive interjection; in abusive expressions
ME	voidenesse*	evacuation of the stomach or bowels

Table 16. continued.

OE and ON	wagginge*	the excrement of a fox
ONF	warderobe*	badger's excrement
OE	ware*	dung used as fertilizer
OE	worthinge*	dung, manure
OE	wose*	liquid extracted from animal dung used as a medicine

Table 17. ME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs.[199]

ME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs		
Language of Origin	Terms	Meaning
AN	avoiden*	to evacuate (the bowels); to void (excrement)
OE	bidingen*	to cover with dung or filth, befoul
OE	bishiten*	to void excrement upon, defile
L	cakken	to void excrement
AF	croteien	of the deer and the hare: to void excrement (in pellets)
ON	cukken	to void excrement
L	defien*	to void (excrement)
OF	devoiden*	to void (excrement)
ME	dongen*	to manure a field, plant; of a horse, to void excrement
OE	driten	to defecate
OF	fen	of certain animals: to void dung
OE	filen*	to void excrement, defecate
OE and ME	foulen*	to void excrement
OE	gon*	to ease one's bowels
OF	muten	of a hawk: to void excrement
ME	mutesen	of a hawk: to void excrement
ME	orduren	to defecate
AN	purgen*	to purge (the body) by a laxative, a diuretic, or an emetic, clear (the stomach) through complete digestion; to purge (a humor, evil humors), eliminate (morbid matter, toxins, digested matter, fecal matter); to evacuate (the bowels), void (excrement, urine); to defecate, of feces: evacuate themselves

[199] Terms and definitions were gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed.; *The Oxford English Dictionary: Historical Thesaurus*; *The Middle English Dictionary*; and Ross, *Chaucer's Bawdy*. Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.

Table 17. continued.

OE	shiten	to defecate, void excrement
OE	sitten*	to void excrement
ON	skiten	to defecate, void excrement
OF	voiden*	to defecate or vomit

Table 18. ME Semantic Field Terms: Bad.[200]

ME Semantic Field Terms: Bad[201]		
Language of Origin	Terms	Meaning
ME	dongi*	miry, muddy, filthy, foul
OE	drasti*	like dregs; poor as to color or quality; crude, trashy, ignorant, inartistic
ME	dritti*	feculent; muddy; filthy
OE	quede*	evil, wickedness; an evil thing or event; a wicket act or sin; harm or trouble; sickness or injury; an evil person or creature; a villain, scoundrel; an enemy; a miser; the Devil

From the data, it is clear that there was quite a bit of language borrowing during ME as the semantic field of *excrement* expanded to approximately 71 terms and the semantic field of *excrement* verbs expanded to 22 terms; however, it is possible that these forms were in the spoken language much earlier than is attested in the written language. Further, it is also evident that quite a few terms fell out of use in the language (i.e. *dinig, driting, droge, dyncge, earsgang, mesa, mixendynge, utgang, ut(ge)gan, ut gangan, utsihtadl*).[202] In addition, it is apparent that terms used for excrement often became

[200] Terms and definitions were gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed.; *The Oxford English Dictionary: Historical Thesaurus*; *The Middle English Dictionary*; and Ross, *Chaucer's Bawdy*. Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.
[201] These terms were included because although they do not fall into the semantic field of excrement, their forms are related to the terms that are included in that field.
[202] Formal and poetic vocabulary suffer the most loss between OE and ME, which can explain some of the vocabulary loss. In addition, another reason for term disappearance is if the word is not reinforced by an ON cognate entering the language (i.e. a linguistic equivalent from the same root but occurring in different languages), which is apparent in ME and EME. For instance, ON *skit* is the cognate for OE *scitte*, but there is no cognate for OE *meox* that entered into English, and this term later disappears out of the language and occurs just once on ME.

polysemous,[203] generalizing in meaning and taking on connotations of "bad" or "evil," which were used as terms of abuse or in order to give something a negative connotation; however, it must be noted that it is probable that these terms were developing these connotations in the spoken language earlier than is attested in the written language. In addition, of the terms original OE terms, only 4 do not also carry euphemistic meanings of "bad". Nevertheless, Tables 19, 20, and 21 illustrate the uses of *tord*, *drit*, and *gore* (respectively) used in ways other than their primary meaning of excrement. Table 19 is from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, a collection of fictional stories written between 1380 – 1400CE;[204] the principal MSS are the Ellesmere MS (MS EL 26 C 9, circa 1410CE) and the Hengwrt MS (Peniarth MS 392D), which were copied between the late 14th century and the early 15th century. Table 18 is from John Wyclif's "On the Seven Deadly Sins," a religious treatise written between 1377 – 1384CE.[205] Table 19 is from the morality play "Castle of Perseverance," written in approximately 1425CE; this example and also Table 19 also illustrate the use of excrement terms in insults, which may be a

[203] Meanings that extended to the semantic field of "bad" were included in Figure 15 for illustrative purposes. Terms that fell under the scope of the field when combined with another word were not included, nor were all other meanings of the polysemous terms due to space. An apt example of this polysemy is *gon*—the ME equivalent to the PDE "to go"—was used mostly as it is used today, which is to indicate movement from one locality to another, but just as today it also is associated with the semantic field of *excrement verbs*.

[204] Geoffrey Chaucer, "Tale of Thopas," *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xxix.

[205] John Wyclif, *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. Thomas Arnold, 3 vols. (Oxford: Macmillan and Co., 1869-1871), 3: viii.

precursor to scatological flyting[206] that was somewhat popular in the 16th century (discussed in the EME section).[207]

Table 19. Example from Geoffrey Chaucer's "Tale of Thopas" of *The Canterbury Tales*, approximately 1380 – 1400CE.[208]

ME:	*"By*	*God,"*	*quod*	*he*
PDE:	by	god	said	he
	"for	*pleynly*	*at*	*a*
	for	plainly	at	a
	word,	*Thy*	*drasty*	*ryming*
	word	your	crappy	rhyming
	is	*nat*	*worth*	*a*
	is	not	worth	a
	toord!*"*			
	turd			
"'By God,' he said, 'for plainly at a word, your crappy rhyming is not worth a **turd**!'"				

Table 20. Example from John Wyclif's "On the Seven Deadly Sins," approximately 1377 – 1384CE.[209]

ME:	*And,*	*as*	*Seynt*	*Bernarde*
PDE:	and	as	saint	Bernard
	seies,	*a*	*mon*	*while*
	say(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	a	man	while
	he	*lyves*	*is*	*a*
	he	live(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	is(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	a
	seck	*ful*	*of*	***drytt***
	sack	full	of	shit
	and	þat	is	litel
	and	that	is(3rd per. Pres Sg)	little
	bewte moral attractiveness			

[206] Flyting is "ritual abuse, or festive abuse" (Cochran, 186), or a "contest, as a format for the ritualized expression of adversativeness" (Parks, 285); See Carol M. Cochran, "Flyting in the Mystery Plays," *Theatre Journal* 31.2 (May, 1979): 186-97 at 186 and Ward Parks, "The Flyting Speech in Traditional Heroic Narrative," *Neophilologus* 71 (1987): 285-95 at 285.
[207] F. J. Furnivall and Alfred W. Pollard, eds., *The Macro Plays: 1. Mankind (ab. 1475). 2. Wisdom (ab. 1460). 3. The Castle of Perseverance (ab. 1425)*, Early English Text Society, Extra Series 91 (London: K. Paul, Trench, Trübner, 1904), xxiii-xxiv.
[208] Chaucer, "Tale of Thopas," 216, lines 929-30.
[209] Wyclif, *Select English Works*, 3: 125.

Table 20. continued.

"And as Saint Bernard says, a man while he lives a sack full of **shit** and has little moral attractiveness."

Table 21. Example from "The Castle of Perseverance," 1425CE[210]

ME:	*Fro*	*oure*	*lordys*	*lyth*
PDE:	from	our	lord(POSS)	light
	þou	*hast*	*me*	*let*
	you	have(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	me	give(2nd per. SUBJ Pres)
	sory	*synne,*	*þou*	*grisly*
	sorrowful	sin	you	horrible
	gore*!*			
	vile			
	person			
"From our lord's light you have given me sorrowful sin, you horrible, **vile thing**."				

Regarding *scitte* specifically, spelled *shit* or *schit* in ME (also *schute, schyt, shitta*),[211] this term also began to take on negative connotations, though it still retained its original, neutral relation to defecation. Table 22, a selection from the debate poem *The Owl and the Nightingale*, illustrates the extension of the meaning to a general term for *bad*. The poem survives in two 13th century MSS: i.e. the British Museum MS Cotton Caligual A. IX (listed as "C" in Table 20), which dates to 1250CE, and the Jesus College, Oxford, MS 29(II) (listed as "J" in Table 20), which dates to 1216CE;[212] however, the poem itself appears to have been composed between 1189 – 1216CE.[213] Alternatively, Table 23 exemplifies how *shit* still retained its extension to defecation, and it comes from John Trevisa's ME translation of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon* (the principle MS is

[210] Furnivall and Pollard, *The Macro Plays*, 119, lines 1412-1413.
[211] *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* 3rd ed., s.v. "shit, n. and adj."
[212] J. H. G. Grattan and G. F. H. Sykes, eds., *The Owl and the Nightingale,* Early English Text Society, Extra Series 119 (1935; repr., London: Oxford University Press, 1959), ix.
[213] Grattan and Sykes, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, xx.

Cambridge MS St. John's College H.1 and dates to approximately 1387CE[214]), which is a chronicle detailing the history of the world from Genesis to Higden's time when he finished it in approximately 1342CE.[215]

Table 22: Example from *The Owl and the Nightingale*, from both the British Museum MS Cotton Caligual A. IX (C) and the Jesus College, Oxford, MS 29(II) (J), approximately 1189 – 1216CE.[216]

ME (C):	*Þeyh*	*ich*	*mid*	*changling*
ME (J):	*Þisich*[217]		*mid*	*chauling*
PDE:	if	I	with	squabbling(GERUND)
	and	*myd*	*chatere.*	*Heom*
	&	*mid*	*chatere.*	*Hom*
	and	with	ranting (GERUND)	them
	schende	*&*	*myd*	*fule*
	schende	*&*	*mid*	*fule*
	insult(3rd per. Pret. Sg)	and	with	dirty
	worde.	*So*	*herdes*	*doþ*
	porde.	*So*	*herdes*	*doþ*
	words	as	herdsmen	do(3rd per. Pres. Pl)
	oþer	*mid*	***sit***	*worde.*
	oþer	*mid*	***schit***	*porde.*
	or	with	excrement	words
"If I with squabbling and with ranting and with dirty words or with **bad** words insulted them as shepherds do."				

Table 23. Example from John Trevisa's translation of Ranulf Higden's *Polychronicon*, approximately 1387CE.[218]

ME:	*Whanne*	*Donston*	*was*	*dede*
	When	Donston	is(3rd per. Pret. Sg)	dead(PP)
PDE:				

[214] Ranulf Higden and John Trevisa, *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden Monachi Cestrensis: Together with the English Translations of John Trevisa and of an Unknown Writer of the Fifteenth Century*, 9 vols., Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores 41 (1865-1886; repr., Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprints, 1964), 1: lv.

[215] There is some question as to when he finished it because some MSS have earlier finish dates and chronicle entries (i.e. 1321CE) and later finish dates and chronicle entries (i.e. 1357CE); See Higden and Trevisa, *Polychronicon*, 1: xiv.

[216] Grattan and Sykes, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, 10, lines 284-86.

[217] Grattan and Sykes state that this is "*a blend of* þah *and* ȝif." See Grattan and Sykes, *The Owl and the Nightingale*, 10.

[218] Higden and Trevisa, *Polychronicon*, 7: 51.

Table 23. continued.

	þat that	*ȝere* years	*tweie* two	*pestilencis* infectious diseases
	þat that	*were* is(3rd per. Pret. Pl)	*unknowe* unknown	*to* to
	forhonde beforehand	*fil* happen(3rd per. Pret. Sg)	*in* in	*Engelond,* England
	for as	*men* people	*had* have(3rd per Pret. Pl)	*þe* the
	feveres, fevers	*and* and	*bestes* animals	*þe* the
	schyt. diarrhea			
"When Donston was dead, that 2 years infectious diseases that were beforehand unknown happened in England, as people had the fevers and animals the **diarrhea**."				

As aforementioned, it is likely that the spoken lexicon already had these connotations for these lexical items before it appeared in text. Unfortunately, historical data can only be gathered from the written record, and so it is impossible to predict exactly when this shift began to happen. Nevertheless, these examples illustrate that these terms were undergoing semantic broadening, and *shit* was not an exception, although this particular term may have lost some of its momentum during the EME period due to censorship.

It is also important to note that while these terms took on negative connotations, they still resided in the semantic field of *excrement* during this period, and Tables 24, 25, and 26 illustrate this usage. Table 24 is from an ME translation of Lanfranco of Milan's *Science of Cirurgie*; the principal ME MSS of this work are from the Ashmole MS 1396, which was copied in 1380CE, and the Addit. MS. Brit. Mus. 12056, which was copied approximately 1420CE. Table 25 is from an ME "translation of Guy de Chauliac's

Inventarium seu Collectorim in Parte Cyrurgicali Medicine," which is called *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*;[219] the MS contains a "comprehensive treatise on the science and art of surgical medicine" and was translated approximately 1425CE – 1450CE.[220] Table 26 is from a MS detailing ordinances and bylaws of the city of Worchester, England, dating to approximately 1467CE.[221]

Table 24. Example from Lanfranco of Milan's *Science of Cirugie*, 1380CE.[222]

ME:	*Also*	*take*	*an*	*houndis*
PDE:	Also	take(IMP Sg)	a	hound(POSS)
	tord	*þat*	*etiþ*	*oonly*
	turd	that	eat(3rd per. Pres. Sg)	only
	boonis	*&*	*of*	*hennis,*
	bones	and	of	hens
	satureye	*ana*	*&*	*make*
	savory	in the same amount	and	make(IMP Sg)
	þerof	*poudre*	*&*	*distempere*
	thereof	powder	and	blend(IMP Sg)
	it	*wiþ*	*water*	*&*
	it	with	water	and
	hony			
	honey			
"Also take a **turd** of hound which eats only bones and chickens, savory in the same amount, and make a powder with that, and blend it with water and honey."				

Table 25. Example from *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac,* approximately 1425CE – 1450CE.[223]

ME:	*forwhie*	*if*	*it*	*happede*
PDE:	for that reason	if	it	should happen(3rd per. Pret. Sg SUBJ)

[219] Margaret S. Ogden, ed., *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, Early English Text Society, Original Series 265 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), iii.
[220] Ogden, *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac*, iii.
[221] Joshua Toulmin Smith, Lucy Toulmin Smith, and Lujo Brentano, eds., *English Gilds: The Original Ordinances of More Than One Hundred Early English Gilds: Together With þe Olde Vsages of þe Cite of Wynchester; the Ordinances of Worcester; the Office of the Mayor of Bristol; And the Costomary of the Manor of Tettenhall-Regis. From Original Mss. of the Fourteenth And Fifteenth Centuries*, Early English Text Society, Original Series 40 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1870), 410.
[222] Lanfranco of Milan, *Lanfrank's "Science of cirurgie': Edited from the Bodleian Ashmole ms. 1396 (ab. 1380 A.D.) and the British museum Additional ms. 12,056 (ab. 1420 A.D.),* ed. R. von Fleishhacker, Early English Text Society, Original Series 102 London: N. Trübner & Co,, 1894), 218.
[223] Ogden, *The Cyrurgie of Guy de Chauliac* , 502, lines 31-32.

Table 25. continued.

	þat that	*þe* the	*guttes* intestines	*schulde* shall(SUBJ Pret. Pl)
	falle fall(SUBJ Pret. Pl)	*into* into	*codde* scrotum	*wiþ* with
	harde hard	***drestes*** turds	*or* or	***þostes***, excrement
	þai they	*schulde* shall(SUBJ Pret. Pl)	*neuer* at no time	*goo* go(SUBJ Pret. Pl)
	yn in	*aʒeyn* again	*it* it	
"'For that reason if it should happen that the intestines should fall into the scrotum with hard **turds** or **excrement** they shall at no time go in it again."				

Table 26. Example from the ordinances of the city of Worchester, England, approximately 1467CE.[224]

ME: PDE:	*Also* also	*that* that	*no* no	*Sadeler,* saddle maker
	Bocho^{r}*,* butcher	*Baker,* baker	*ne* (NEG)	*Glover,* glove maker
	ne (NEG)	*none* no	*other* other	*persone* person
	caste throw	*non* no	*Intrelle* organs	*ne* (NEG)
	fylth filth	*of* of	*Bestes* animal(POSS)	***donge***, dung
	ne (NEG)	*doust,* rubbish	*over* over	*Severne* Severn
	Brugge bridge			
	"Also that no saddle maker, butcher, baker, glove maker, nor no other person throw organs nor filth of animal **dung** nor rubbish over the Severn Bridge."			

[224] Smith, Smith, and Brentano, *English Gilds*, 396.

2.2.2.3 Usage[225]

Regarding usage and genre, the preceding examples and Table 27 both illustrate that these terms occurred in a variety of genres, including but not limited to chronicles, law, literature, medicine, and religious texts, just as in OE. Of note, this usage was still a part of the medical sphere in that it was still used as a medicinal substance at this time, which means that this substance was not necessarily considered taboo at this time. Further, it seems that unlike OE, *donge* was the most popular term used in ME, followed by *tord, tirdel,* and *gore.* Although it cannot be said that the increase in *donge's* usage is entirely due to popularity and not register, the distribution and polysemous usage of these terms as both denoting excrement and also as terms of abuse indicate that there was not a taboo on the semantic field of *excrement*, nor of particular terms as they were used in insults as well as for technical terms (i.e. medical texts. See especially Tables 19 and 24).

Table 27. ME Excrement Terms: Genre Analysis[226]

ME Excrement Terms: Genre Analysis		
Terms	Corpus Instances	Genre
donge	126	Literature, Religious text, Records, Chronicle, Medical text, Law, Glossary, Agricultural treatise, Animal husbandry treatise, Domestic life treatise
gore	10	Literature, Glossary
mix	1	Religious text

[225] A corpus genre analysis of all the terms was not possible due to their polysemous natures, as every text and instance would have to be analyzed individually; however, Figure 25 provides a comparative model for some of the original OE terms that survived into ME, which includes extant forms in both the semantic field of *excrement* and the semantic field of *bad*; *Mixen* was not included because it means "dung hill" in ME and not excrement specifically, and no examples of *shitel outsight* could not be located. The previous ME textual examples also illustrate a wide variation usage across all different genres. Future research is suggested for further genre analysis.

[226] *Gore* is not included in this analysis because it was one of 3 nouns with that exact spelling were not included in this analysis due to their polysemic status, as more in-depth research is required to determine in which instance it is used to mean *excrement* and it was not possible to access all texts required for analysis. This is suggested for future research. However, *dung* was included as the only instance found meant *excrement. Mixen* was also included as it means both excrement and a mound composed of excrement.

Table 27. continued.

sharn	5	Glossary, Chronicle, Medical text, Animal husbandry treatise
shit	2	Literature, Chronicle
tord	55	Literature, Religious text, Chronicle, Medical text, Treatise on fishing, Glossary, Recipes, Treatise on hawking
tirdel	12	Recipes, Hunting treatise, Medical text, Treatise on Hawking, Glossary
thost	15	Literature, Religious text, Chronicle, Glossary, Medical text, Agricultural treatise, Treatise on horses,

What must necessarily be emphasized is that although Table 27 represents some usage of excrement terms, it does not give an accurate description of all possible usage, nor does it illustrate which words may have been the most popular as there are 63 other terms that were used during this period. Furthermore, poetry was a very popular approach to literature, and different terms were used for poetic rhyme and meter, which means that some of the popularity is most likely related to a term's usefulness in rhyme with other terms and fulfillment of the requirements of meter, as in Table 19 (i.e. *word*/*toord*).

2.2.2.4 Comparative Model

During this period, there was a considerable push to have the Bible translated into English, not just select books as had been done in OE. This movement was termed Lollardy, and it called for religious reform of the Catholic Church,[227] but for our purposes, the most important aspect of the movement was the push for the Bible to be translated into English so that there was no longer an intermediary (i.e. priest) in between

[227] Especially in relation to the Eucharist.

lay people and the word of God.[228] The pushback from the Church and State was that English was not considered an appropriate, authoritative language for the entire word of God,[229] and there were constitutions developed against "teaching and…the use of translations of the scripture in the vernacular."[230] As a result, the movement in its entirety was denounced as heretical, and supporters were persecuted, condemned, and executed. Unpopular though it was due to the seemingly heretical elements associated with the movement, this was not an isolated event from a radical group of anti-Catholic Church protesters.

However, although Lollardy was denounced by the Church and the government, this did not stop John Wyclif from translating the Bible into ME. Furthermore, although it seems that "the whole Bible was translated into English *long before* [John] Wiclif's days, and that he himself had seen such copies," it is John Wyclif's translation of the bible that has survived from ME; Wyclif was an early proponent of Bible translation into English, and he translated the Bible in to ME in approximately 1380CE,[231] which is referred to as the early version. A later version was copied posthumously in approximately 1395CE.[232]

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[228] Maurice Keen, *England in the Later Middle Ages: A Political History*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2003), 189; Shannon McSheffrey, Norman Tanner, eds. and trans., *Lollards of Coventry, 1486-1522*, Camden Society Fifth Series 23 (New York: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 1.
[229] Sections of the Bible and some constitutions were translated into English, but the Church was against a translation of the entire book.
[230] Keen, *England in the later Middle Age*, 192.
[231] Miles Coverdale, et al., *The English Hexapla: Exhibiting the Six Important English Translations of the New Testament Scriptures…* (London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1841), 36.
[232] John Wyclif, *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments, with the Apocryphal Books, in the Earliest English Versions Made from the Latin Vulgate by John Wycliffe and his Followers*, ed. Josiah Forshall and Frederic Madden, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1850), 1: xxiii.

Tables 28 and 29[233] illustrate examples of excrement terms from both versions. Table 28 is taken from Exodus 29:14, and the early version illustrates the use of *dryt* (*drit*) and the later version illustrates the use of *dung* (*donge*) in Exodus 29:14 as terms for excrement. Table 29 is from Luke 13:8 and illustrates the usage of *toordis* (*tord*) in the early version and *donge* in the later version; here, *donge* is used in the "to manure" sense, whereas in OE (and elsewhere in ME, see Table 28, No. 1) a separate verb was used to accomplish this.

Table 28. Example from John Wyclif's translation of the Bible, Exodus 29:14.[234]

MSS		Text
1	Early version, approximately 1380CE.	*The flesh forsothe of the calf, and the skynne, and the **dryt**, thow shalt outforth brenne out of the tentis, forthi that it is for synne.*
2	Later version, approximately 1395CE.	*Forsothe thou schalt brenne with out the castels the fleischis of the calf, and the skyn, and the **dung**, for it is for synne.*
	PDE Translation (No. 1):	"The flesh therefore of the calf, and the skin, and the **dung**, you must burn outside away from the tents, because that is [a sacrifice] for sin."
	PDE Translation (No. 2):	"Therefore, you shall burn without the camp the flesh of the calf, and the skin, and the **dung**, for it is [a sacrifice] for sin."

Table 29. Example from John Wyclif's translation of the Bible, Luke 13:8.[235]

MSS		Text
1	Early version, approximately 1380CE.	*And he answeringe seide to him, Lord, suffre also this ȝeer, til the while I delue aboute it, and sende*[236] ***toordis**;*

[233] This data was taken from Forshall and Madden's transcription of Wyclif's bible: for the early version, they collated 19 MSS, and for the later version they transcribed the "Old Roy. Libr. Mus. 1 C. 8" MS, collating it with 33 other MSS. See Wyclif, *The Holy Bible*, 1: xxxiv.
[234] Wyclif, *The Holy Bible*, 1: 262.
[235] Wyclif, *The Holy Bible*, 4: 193.
[236] It is interesting that Wyclif retains the reading found in the Lindesfarne gospels (i.e. Cotton MS Nero D. 4) rather than the West Saxon reading in the archaic usage of "sende," which may suggest he had access to the Lindesfarne Gospels or he translated from the same (or similar) MS that the author of the Lindesfarne Gospels had access to.

Table 29. continued.

2	Later version, approximately 1395CE.	*And he answerynge seide to hym, Lord, suffre it also this ȝeer, the while Y delue aboute it, and Y schal* ***donge*** *it;*
PDE Translation (No. 1):		"And he answering said to him, 'Lord, allow [it] also this year, until the while I dig about it, and apply dung."
PDE Translation (No. 2):		"And he answering said to him, 'Lord, allow it also this year, while I dig about it, and I will **spread manure around** it."

2.2.3 Early Modern English *S—T*

2.2.3.1 Historical Context

EME is defined as English spoken approximately between the 16th – 18th centuries, and "is the first [period] in which English speakers stand back and take a serious look at their language," meaning that this was the period when people become "self-conscious about their language" use.[237] Before discussing the excrement terms for this period, it is necessary to discuss the historical context of the period.

2.2.3.1.1 Nationalism

As aforementioned, before the 14th century it was common for members of the monarchy to either use French as the language of the court while having some knowledge of English or to not know English altogether. However, during Henry IV's reign from 1399 – 1413CE, there was an "increased use of the English vernacular" in government, which is speculated to have come about because he appealed "to the commons for support" to preserve his claim to the throne.[238] The important aspect of this for our

[237] C.M. Millward, *A Biography of the English Language*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Wadsworth, 1996), 224.
[238] John H. Fisher, *The Emergence of Standard English*, (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 20. During King Richard II's reign, there was a directed movement to remove King Richard from the throne because his political actions implied that no one could count on their inheritance remaining sacrosanct, safe from royal interference, and he blackmailed his subjects into obedience. Thus on

purposes was that he 1) addressed the parliament (i.e. the government) in English, which was momentous as French was still the predominant language concerning matters of state; and 2) government documents tentatively started to be written in English because writing official documents shifted slightly from the court to the parliament, in which the language was predominantly English. Thus began the shift to using English language in the court.

However, it was Henry V (reigned 1413 – 1422CE) who more fully developed the use of English in government as he exclusively used English "in nearly all of his correspondence with the government and the citizens of London and other English cities."[239] Throughout his reign, French began to be marginalized in its use in government[240] and eventually, "English entries [in the *Rotuli Pariliamentorum*, or Rolls of Parliament] begin to be more frequent, and by 1450 they [were] the rule."[241] In essence, "Henry V's use of English marks the turning point in establishing English as the national language of England."[242] This development created an environment compatible with the development of English nationalism, since "national states in the modern sense had begun [to emerge] all over Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries," [243] which meant there was now a space for pride in "Englishness" and the English language.

September 30, 1399 "an assembly met in Westminster Hall" to discuss charges against Richard II and "renounce homage and fealty to him on behalf of the whole realm." It was at this time that Henry Bolingbroke, back from Richard II's imposed exile, claimed the crown for himself based on a blood connection to the royal house via Henry III; however, many did not accept his title to the throne and rebelled continuously. See Keen, *England in the later Middle Ages*, 234, 238-39, 243.

[239] Fisher, *Emergence of Standard English*, 22.

[240] Although "French [did continue] as a spoken language of some members of the nobility and merchant class into the fifteenth century," Fisher, *Emergence of Standard English*, 45.

[241] Fisher, *Emergence of Standard English*, 45-46.

[242] Fisher, *Emergence of Standard English*, 22.

[243] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 225.

In addition, this was also the period of the Hundred Years' War (i.e. 1337 – 1453CE), which was a war between England and France over control of the French crown. This war in part led to the reduction in prestige of the French language. This also lead to the divorce of the English court from the French court, further solidifying the legitimacy and preference of use of the English language.

With regard to the EME period specifically, "nationalism in England received an especially strong impetus when Elizabeth I was excommunicated by papal bull in 1570,"[244] and given her popularity as a monarch, this especially "fostered pride in the English language," which meant that Latin lost its status of "*the* language of learning" in England.[245] There was also a "conscious desire to produce a national literature in English to parallel the grand epics of Homer and Virgil in Greek and Latin," which lead to such works as Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queen* in 1590CE.[246]

The last and most important event with regard to nationalism for the purposes of this study was that "the American colonies revolted and became an independent nation" at this time.[247] This resulted in the development of an American national identity. Furthermore, it contributed heavily to language drift (which was probably already happening due to the distance between England and the Americas) and development of an American variety of English as the dialects England and the United States changed separately. However, the American variety of English would not be considered a "legitimate" variety for many years, which will be discussed in PDE.

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[244] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 225-26.
[245] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 226.
[246] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 226.
[247] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 227.

2.2.3.1.2 Technological Innovation and Language Borrowing

EME was also a period of technological development, with the advent of the printing press in 1476CE, and "the effects of printing were manifold": it froze English spelling and "made books available at a relatively low price…leading to increased demand for books and literacy, especially among the middle and lower classes…[as] these middle classes did not have the opportunity or the leisure to obtain a classical education, so they wanted books in English rather than Latin or French."[248] However, "because the earliest printing presses were set up in the London area, the written English of the texts produced was in the London dialect, a fact important in making this dialect the standard for written English throughout England" as speakers of other dialects were now exposed to the London dialect, which ultimately lead to the "decline in the prestige of regional dialects because they were no longer being written down."[249] This and other factors, such as the English Renaissance and the translation of classical Latin and Greek works into English and the Protestant Reformation with the belief that "people should read the Bible for themselves" and the resulting rash of bible translations, lead to the promotion and celebration of the English language.[250]

However, people still questioned its "suitability as a scholarly language…[even until] the seventeenth century"[251] because:

> English was not understood beyond the shores of England,…[it] was changing constantly and their English writings would not be easily accessible to future generations, and…[it] lacked the vocabulary necessary for the learning ushered in by the Renaissance…[as] both the translators of the Latin and Greek classics and

[248] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 224.
[249] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 224.
[250] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 225.
[251] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 227.

> the practitioners of the new learning….discovered that the existing word stock of English was insufficient to express economically and elegantly the ideas they wanted to convey.[252]

Furthermore, "Latin was still the international language of scholarship," which meant that it was necessary to write in Latin to enter the larger scholastic conversation.[253] This issue was resolved as "English did increase its vocabulary to accommodate the new learning," doing so in part "by coining new English words or extending the meanings of existing ones" and "by borrowing Latin roots" and words, and as "impressive as the French loans of Middle English had been, they were greatly outnumbered by the Latin loans of the Renaissance," which was a conscientious effort "done by specific individuals, many of whom were deliberately attempting to improve the language."[254] In addition, the end of the EME period ushered in the Industrial revolution, which "eventually led to the massive technical vocabulary based on Latin and Greek roots that is so characteristic of Present-Day English," were further affecting the lexicon. Incidentally, these loans "were familiar to speakers of other European language,"[255] helping those not familiar with English to understand some of it, thus elevating English as a scholarly language, although this change in prestige and use took centuries. Lastly, with regard to language change, the printing press slowed "the rate of change in the written language," which is why "works written in the seventeenth century are more comprehensible to a twentieth-century reader

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[252] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 228.
[253] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 227.
[254] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 228-29.
[255] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 228.

than works written in the fourteenth century,"[256] solving the issue of constant language change.

There were those who objected to the influx of words into the lexicon, being "concerned about the purity of the English vocabulary and resented borrowing because it contaminated its purity;"[257] This is hardly surprising as in some "borrowers" were not "responsible…often [introducing] loans without explaining them," which meant that "the average reader found their work virtually incomprehensible."[258] Of course, those who objected to language borrowing "accepted borrowing in principle, realizing that English was insufficient in some ways, but objected to the foolish excesses, to the use of strange and obscure Latin words when adequate English equivalents already existed."[259] Some sought to reintroduce archaic Anglo-Saxon terms,[260] while others tried "coining new terms from the basic English stock, and adapting dialectal forms into the standard language."[261]

2.2.3.1.3 Standardization

As aforementioned, this was also the period of linguistic anxiety in which English standardization started to take place. As stated above, English spelling became frozen during this period, leading to a standard English spelling, and people across the nation were also exposed to the London dialect, which became the standard dialect because it

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[256] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 228.
[257] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 230; See also Johnathan Swift, *A Proposal for Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, ed. R. C. Alston, English Linguistics 1500 – 1800 213 (1712; repr., Menston, UK: The Scolar Press Limited, 1969), 10.
[258] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 229.
[259] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 229; See also Swift, *Proposal*, 34.
[260] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 230; See also Swift, *Proposal*, 31.
[261] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 230.

was the dialect that was printed. However, "the standardization of spelling seems to have been a by-product of the general elaboration of English, and not the result of a centrally controlled codification,"[262] which means that the printing press and the influx of loan words influenced the spelling system rather than "the pruning away of variation and establishment of norms," which "did not begin in earnest until the middle of the [eighteenth] century."[263]

Other factors also contributed to language standardization, such as the movement towards urbanization from peasant disenfranchisement and eviction from rural areas to make way for the wool industry.[264] This movement "fostered the rise of a middle class whose members wanted to improve their social and economic standing," which meant they were "concerned about correct behavior, including linguistic behavior." This resulted in the creation of grammars and "handbooks of correct usage" in order to "teach the middle classes how to sound like those they considered their betters."[265] Of course, with the creation of handbooks, the "hard and fast practical rules that are easy to understand and memorize"[266] had to be created as well, which lead to the development of linguistic prescriptivism and judgments on "good" and "bad" language.

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[262] Simon Horobin and Jeremy Smith, *An Introduction to Middle English*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 34.
[263] Roger Lass, "Phonology and Morphology," *A History of the English Language*, ed. Richard Hogg and David Denison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 43-108 at 99.
[264] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 226.
[265] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 226.
[266] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 226.

2.2.3.1.4 Discussion

As should be readily evident, standardization of the English language is a relatively recent innovation, resulting from a variety of factors, not least of which "to further the construction of national identity"; [267] however, standardization may have also acted as a scapegoat to express anxiety[268] for "extra-linguistic concerns," such as poverty and propriety, through severe policing of language change and variation.[269] Furthermore, although concerns about proprietary behavior began to develop during this period, the effects on the language with regard to linguistic taboo took place mostly during the latter part of the EME period and fully developed during the 19th century, which will be discussed later. Nevertheless, this and the enormous influx of borrowed words into the lexicon from various sources (i.e. exploration and colonization in addition to Latin language borrowing[270]) vastly changed the face of the language. Furthermore, the desire to elevate the language and the need to express novel ideas in the language lead to language extension and specialization.

2.2.3.2 Terms

From the forgoing discussion, it is expected that the semantic field of *excrement* would have gained terminology, which is the case; however, one of the primary processes was the addition of terms through generalization to the meaning of excrement, such as

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[267] Tim William Machan, *Language Anxiety: Conflict and Change in the History of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22.
[268]Tim William Machan argues that language change and variation "[have] euphemistically displaced anxiety about [social] issues and that so long as the anxiety remains centered on language, the other issues can never be fully addressed," Machan, *Language Anxiety,* 22.
[269] Machan, *Language Anxiety*, 25.
[270] Millward, *Biography of the English Language*, 226-27.

stool and *opening*, and all of this resulted in an addition of approximately 54 terms.[271] Moreover, many terms fell into disuse (of the original OE terms, *mix, oversight, shitel, thost,* and *tirdeling* fell out of use) or were no longer used to refer to excrement, for a total loss of 31 terms in the semantic field of *excrement* from ME to EME. These processes resulted in a total of approximately 93 terms for excrement in EME. In contrast, of the 22 excrement verbs in ME, 8 were no longer used to refer to voiding excrement, and 13 more were added to the semantic field. In the following, Table 30 provides an ME to EME translation, Table 31 is a table of extant terms in the semantic field of *excrement*, and Table 32 is a table of terms for the semantic field of *excrement verbs*.[272] Data regarding approximate date of last use (as a term referring to excrement) is also included to illustrate the fluctuation of words in and out of the language during this period, perhaps due to the movement to rid the language of unnecessary vocabulary and fluctuations in popularity and applicability of usage.

Table 30. ME to EME Orthographic Translation.

ME to EME Translation	
ME	EME
avoiden	avoid
bishiten	beshit
cakken	cack
croteis	croteys
cukken	cuck
diaria	diarrhea
digestioun	digestion
donge	dung
dong-hep	dungheap
dongen	dung

[271] It is possible that more terms were used than are recorded in the literature or there is an extant form that was not discovered through research.

[272] Phrasal verbs were not included (i.e. to do one's easement, to go siege, etc.); although these fall into the semantic field of *excrement* verbs, they are not able to do so without the combination of other words.

Table 30. continued.

drit[273]	dirt
driten	drite
droppinge	dropping
egestioun	egestion
esement	easement
fece	fex
filen	file
foulen	foul
fumes	fewmets
lienteria	lientery
menisoun	menson
muk	muck
muten	mute
mutesen	mutess
purgen	purge
purgacioun	purgation
segge	siege
shiten	shit
skiten	skit
skiterande	skitterand
spraintes	spraints
stercories	stercory
subductioun	subduction
tirdel	treddle
voiden	void

Table 31. EME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement.[274]

EME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement			
Language of Origin	Terms	Meaning	Last Known Use
AF	avoid*	excretion, evacuation	1503
L	cack	excrement	1600
AF	croteys	the globular dung or excrement of hares, etc.	1807
EME	crottels	the globular dung or excrement of hares, etc.	1713

[273] This is an example of metathesis, in which sounds are rearranged in a word. This is also where PDE "bird" comes from (i.e. OE and ME "brid").

[274] Terms, definitions, and dates were gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd ed. and *The Oxford English Dictionary: Historical Thesaurus*. Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.

Table 31. continued.

EME	crotising	the globular dung or excrement of hares, etc.	1677
OF & L	dejection*	fecal discharge, excrement, evacuation of the bowels, fecal discharge	
L	dejecture	matter discharged from the bowels, excrement	1731
L & OF	digestion*	secretion, as part of the third concoction of digestion	1659
Unknown	disenteration	evacuation of the bowels	1654
OE	drast*	feces	1513
ON	dreg*	feces, excrement	1668
ML	diarrhea*	a disorder consisting in the too frequent evacuation of too fluid feces, sometimes attended with gripping pains	
ON	dirt*	excrement; as the type of anything worthless; as term of abuse	
ME	draught*	evacuation, excrement	1659
OE	dropping*	dung of animals	
OE	dung*	excrementitious and decayed matter employed to fertilize the soil, manure; the excrement or feces of animals; applied to that which is morally filthy or defiling, or to matter that is vile, contemptible, or loathsome	
ME	dung-hep/dunghill*	a pile of manure, a dunghill, a pile of refuse or trash; a vile thing, a stinking mess	
EME	dunging*	dropping of excrement	1830
L & OF	egestion*	evacuation of the bowels, excrement	1711
OF	easement*	relief of the body by evacuation of excrement	1712
L	evacuation	evacuated or excreted matter	
L	exclusion	the action of discharging (excrement), excrement	1664
F & L	excrement	feces	
EME	excrementi-tiousness	excrementitious quality, excrement	1660
L	exoneration*	the action of discharging or relieving the contents of the bowels, etc., evacuation	1786
L	fex*	excrement	1540
EME	faecality	fecal matter	1653

Table 31. continued.

OF & L	faeces*	waste matter that is discharged from the bowels; excrement	
F & L	feculence	feces	1733
OF	fen*	excrement	1535
OF	faints/fewmets	the dung of certain animals, e.g. the badger, the fox, etc.	1736
EME	filing	the act of defecation, excrement	1622
OF	fime	dung	1642
OF	flux*	an abnormally copious flowing of blood, excrement, etc., from the bowels or other organs	
OF	foil	what is trampled underfoot, hence manure, dung	1565
Unknown	hurl*	diarrhea	1513
EME	hinder-fallings	excrements	1561
OE	gong*	the contents of a privy; ordure	1562
OE	gore*	dung, feces, filth of any kind, dirt, slime; blood in the thickened state that follows effusion, bloodshed in carnage	1642
SP	guano*	a natural manure found in great abundance on some sea-coasts	
OE	gurry*	diarrhea	
L	laetation	manure	1664
OF	lask*	looseness of the bowels, diarrhea	1803
OF	lasking*	purging, diarrhea	1527
L	lax*	looseness of the bowels, diarrhea (in men and cattle)	
F & L	laxity*	looseness, irretentiveness (of the bowels, etc.)	1789
OF	lesses	the dung of a ravenous animal, as a wild board, wolf, or bear	1807
F & L	lientery	a form of diarrhea, in which the food passes through the bowels partially or wholly undigested	
ME	looseness*	laxity(of the bowels, especially as a morbid symptom, diarrhea, and attack of diarrhea	
EME	manure*	dung, excrement	1532
EME	lurry*	looseness of the bowels	1689
OF	menson*	severe diarrhea	1553
ON	midding*	a dunghill, a dung heap	

Table 31. continued.

OE	mixen*	a place where dung and refuse are put, a dunghill, a midden, a heap of dung, compost, etc., used for manure, dung and other refuse from cowsheds	
AN	motion*	a bowel movement	
ON	muck*	dung, excrement, especially the dung of farm animals used for manure; worldly wealth, money, esp. regarded as sordid, corrupting, etc.; a person or thing regarded as contemptuous, sordid, or worthless	
ME	muting	defecation (of a hawk or other bird), a dropping of a bird	
AN	office*	the function or action of defecating or urinating, excretion	1836
OE	opening*	an evacuation of the bowels	
OF	ordure*	excrement, dung; that which corrupts, defiles, or fouls morally, obscene language, writing action, etc.	
EME	orduring	excrement	1654
EME	outwaxing*	excrement	1541
AN	passage	the action or an act of defecation (or urination), feces	1875
EME	pilgrim-salve*	euphemism for excrement	1670
OF	purgation*	the emptying of the bowels, esp. by the use of a laxative	
L	purgament*	that which is removed or rejected in the process of cleansing, especially a piece of excrement	1676
EME	redeliverage	evacuation of the bowels	1612
MLG	scouring*	the state or fact of being purged, a looseness or flux of the bowels, diarrhea, especially as a disease in livestock	
ON	seat*	stool, evacuation of the bowels	1697
OF	siege*	excrement, ordure	1662
OE	sharn	dung, especially dung of cattle	
OE	shit*	excrement from the bowels, dung, a piece of excrement; an offensive or despicable person, a person whose behavior is regarded as obnoxious	
ME	shiting	the act of defecation; feces	

Table 31. continued.

EME	sir-reverence/ surreverence*	human excrement, a piece or lump of this	1840
ON	skit	diarrhea in animals, especially sheep, scouring	
ME	skitterand/ skittering*	defecating; used as a term of abuse	1721
EME	skitter	diarrhea, looseness or laxity of the bowels, thin excrement	
OF	soil*	ordure, excrement, the dung of animals used as compost	1848
OF	spraints	the excrement of the otter	
MDu or MLG	squirte*	diarrhea, looseness or laxity of the bowels, thin excrement, an attack of diarrhea	
Unknown	squitter	diarrhea	
L	stercory	excrement	1545
L	stercoration*	dung, manure	1733
OE	stool*	the action of evacuating the bowels, an act of discharging feces, a discharge of fecal matter of a specified color, consistency, etc.	
EME	stooling*	the action or process of evacuating the bowels	
L	subduction*	the expulsion or elimination of something, especially excrement, from the body	1676
Unknown	tantadlin/ tantoblin*	a lump of excrement, a turd	1785
OE	turd*	a lump or piece of excrement, excrement, ordure; a type of worthlessness or vileness; in coarse abuse, also applied to a person as a term of execration or contempt	
OE	treddle	a pellet of sheep's or goat's dung	
EME	voiding*	excrements of person or animals	
EME	wherry-go-nimble	looseness of the bowels, diarrhea	
OE	worthing*	dung, manure; moral corruption or filth	1605

Table 32. EME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs.[275]

EME Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs			
Language of Origin	Terms	Meaning	Last Known Use
AN	avoid*	to eject by excretion, to void	1598
EME	beray*	to void excrement upon, defile	1649
OE	beshit	to void excrement upon	1727
L	cack	to void excrement	1731
ON	cast*	to void (excrements)	1704
ON	cuck	to void excrement	1605
OE	drite	to void or drop excrement, to stool	1789
ME	dung*	to drop or eject excrement	
L	evacuate*	to empty (the stomach, bowels, or other bodily organ)	
F & L	excrement	to void excrement	1632
EME	excrementize	to void excrements	1670
L	exonerate*	to void excrement	1762
EME	exstercorate*	to eject as dung	1609
OF	fiant	of an animal: to cast its excrements, to dung	1575
OE	file*	to void excrement	1607
OF	foil*	to cause filth, drop excrement	1616
OE and ME	foul*	to drop ordure	1814
OF	lask*	to become loose in the bowels, to purge	1634
AN	move*	of the bowels, to evacuate feces	
OF	mute	of a bird, esp. a hawk: to discharge feces, to defecate	
ME	mutess	of a hawk: to discharge feces	1595
AN	purge*	to eliminate or expel (waste or harmful matter, etc.) from the body or an organ; to rid one's body of waste or harmful material, to empty one's bowels (especially by taking a laxative), to cause evacuation of the bowels; to empty one's bowels	
ME	ray*	of a sheep or cow: to defecate	1602
ME	mutess	of a hawk: to discharge feces	1595

[275] Terms, definitions, and dates were gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd ed.* and *The Oxford English Dictionary: Historical Thesaurus*. Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.

Table 32. continued.

AN	purge*	to eliminate or expel (waste or harmful matter, etc.) from the body or an organ; to rid one's body of waste or harmful material, to empty one's bowels (especially by taking a laxative), to cause evacuation of the bowels; to empty one's bowels	
ME	ray*	of a sheep or cow: to defecate	1602
MLG	scour*	to discharge, evacuate, purge away (a humour, disease, excrement, etc.)	1740
OF	scumber	of a dog or fox, to evacuate the feces	1694
OE	shit	to void excrement	
ON	skite	to void excrement	1823
OF & L	spurge*	to empty or relieve the bowels by evacuation	1643
OE	stool*	to evacuate the bowels, to evacuate as excrement	1843
OF	void	of person, animals, or their organs: to discharge (some matter) from the body through a natural vent or orifice, especially through the excretory organs, to eject by excretion or evacuation,	
ME	wray	to evacuate	1620

From these tables, it is apparent that the semantic field of *excrement* experienced a lot of change, much of it from borrowing or meaning extension, and that many of these words were polysemous. Of interest is the fact that *turd, shit, dung, dirt, ordure,* and *muck* retained their polysemous meanings from ME, but no other terms were used to also mean the semantic field of *bad* in EME. This does not mean that this usage was losing popularity—quite the contrary. The early part of EME demonstrates scatological flyting, or ritual insult (illustrated to some extent little in Table 19). Flyting has a rich history in the English language and culture, but it seems that scatological flyting did not develop until later in the language. In addition, terms for excrement were used across many

different registers, but as concern over propriety and proper language gained momentum, and to some extent the development of disgust towards excrement, this field began to experience taboo. This is particularly interesting as using fecal matter in medicine was popular up through the 18th century. Unfortunately at the time of this study, a corpus analysis of genre was not available, but the following examples will illustrate some usage of *turd, dung, dirt, excrement, ordure, muck,* and *shit* throughout the period.[276] Table[277] 33 provides a comparison of excrement terms from 1 text; Tables 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39 illustrate the usage of *turd*; Tables 40, 41, 42, 43, and 44 illustrate the usage of *dung*; Tables 45, 46, and 47 illustrate the usage of *dirt*; Tables 40, 48, and 49 illustrate the usage of *muck*; Tables 50 and 51 illustrate the usage of *ordure*; and Tables 52, 53, 54, and 55 illustrate the usage of *shit*. Each group of Tables is followed by a discussion of the texts and data.

Table 33. Example from William Somner's *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum*, 1659CE.[278]

Term		Somner's Gloss/Definition
1	*Gor*	*Fimus, lætamen.* ***Dung***, ***dirt***, ***excrements***. *Flandris,* ***goor***, *limus, lutum, cœnum.*
2	*Meox*	*Fimus, stercus.* ***Dung***, ***muck***. *Whence our* ***mixen*** *and maxen, for a* ***dung-hill***.
3	*Scitan*	*Cacare, forire. To go to* ***stoole***, *to* ***sh----***.
4	*Ðost*	*Fimus.* ***Dung*** *or* ***ordure*** *of man or beast. Hundes þost. Fimus caninus. A dogs* ***t---***.
5	*Tord*	*Stercus, merda, fimus.* ***Dung***, *a* ***t----***. *Hinc. Nostr.* ***Dyrt****.i[dem]*[279] *stercus, sordes. Belgic, driit.*

[276] Although limiting examples to these words will not necessarily provide a precise description of usage throughout this period, this sample will illuminate possible usage trends.
[277] The EME examples do not have a PDE transcription and translation as the language is not far removed from PDE and is thus easier to read and comprehend.
[278] Somner, *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum*.
[279] Latin for "the same as," which means that Somner glosses *dirt* as "the same as" *tord*.

This data comes from William Somner's *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum.* Somner "was a respected antiquarian well-known to the leading Saxon scholars of his day," and his dictionary "was the first printed dictionary of Anglo-Saxon."[280] This data illustrates that as early as 1659CE, some writers started elide letters in words considered offensive. What is most interesting from this example is that although the letters in *turd* and *shit* are elided, none of the other terms used to refer to excrement illustrate this emendation, which may be indicative of register in that *turd* and *shit* may have been already considered inappropriate for more formal registers, such as a scholarly work on antiquated Anglo-Saxon vocabulary.

Table 34. Example from Alexander Montgomerie's "The Last and Thrid Flytting Aganis Captain Alexander Montgomerie as ane Reply to his Third Invective," 1585CE.[281]

EME:	*The blairit buk and bystour, to conclude,* *Hes richt trim teith sumquhat sett on ane thraw* *Ane toppit* ***turde*** *richt tewchlie for to taw.*

Table 35. Example from Edward Guilpin's *Skialetheia, or, a Shadowe of Truth, in Certaine Epigrams and Satyres*, 1598CE.[282]

EME:	*But turne thy backe, and then he turns the word,* *The foul-mouthed knaue wil call thee goodmã* ***Tord****.*

[280] Somner, *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum*.
[281] Alexander Montgomerie, "The Last and Thrid Flytting Aganis Captain Alexander Montgomerie as ane Reply to his Third Invective," *Alexander Montgomerie Poems*, ed. David John Parkinson, 2 vols., Scottish Text Society, Fourth Series 28-29 (Edinburgh: Cromwell Press, 2000), 1: 164. This translates to "The foul and boisterous he-goat, to conclude, his very fine teeth set somewhat irregularly in order to chew very vigorously, a pointed turd." Translation provided by Dr. Shaun Hughes, Department of English, Purdue University.
[282] Edward Guilpin, *Skialetheia, or, a Shadowe of Truth, in Certaine Epigrams and Satyres* (London: J. R. for Nicholas Ling, 1598).

Table 36. Example from Christopher Cartwright's *Certamen Religiosum*, 1649CE.[283]

EME:	*No marvel that he is so taxed for his obscenity in his Henzius Anglicus, against King Hen, the eight, for his beastlinesse in his Hans worst against the Jewes: for his filthy mentioning of Hogs, for his stincking repetition of* ***turds*** *and dunghills, in his Schemhamphorise.*

Table 37. Example from Robert Boyle's *Medicinal Experiments*, 1731CE.[284]

EME:	*A choice Remedy for the Pain of the Hæmorrhoids. Take Album Græcum, or white Dogs-****turd****, reduc'd to an impalpable Powder, mix it up with a suffiecient Quantity of Goosegrease, and by grinding it well in a Leaden Mortar.*

Table 38. Example from Tobias Smollett's *Sir Lancelot Greaves*,[285] 1761CE.[286]

EME:	*'Thatch your house with* ***t—d****, and you'll have more teachers than reachers.'—Having pronounced this inelegant adage, he made shift to stand upon his legs; and now, the knight lending a hand, was mounted upon Gilbert, though not without a world of ohs! And ahs! And other ejaculations of pain and impatience.*

Table 39. Example from Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue,* 1796CE.[287]

EME:	***T—D****. There were four t—ds for dinner; stir t—d, hold t—d, treat t—d, and must—d; to wit, a hog's face, feet, and chitterlings, with mustard. He will never sh—e a seaman's t—d; i.e. he will never make a good seaman.*

From these examples, we can see a progression of *turd's* association with negative connotations, and probably taboo, and also an illustration of use in register. For instance, it is apparent that *turd* was acceptable through at least 1600CE as a term of

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[283] Christopher Cartwright and Thomas Bayly, *Certamen Religiosum, or, A Conference Between the Late King of England, and the Late Lord Marquesse of Worcester, Concerning Religion* (London: W. Lee and R. Royston, 1651), 91.
[284] Robert Boyle, *Medicinal Experiments: Or, a Collection of Choice and Safe Remedies, for the Most Part Simple, and Easily Prepar'd: Very Useful in Families, and Fitted for the Service of the Country People*, 7th ed. (London: W. Innys, Printer to the Royal Society, 1731), 107.
[285] Tobias Smollett, "Sir Lancelot Greaves," *The Miscellaneous Works of Tobias Smollett with Memoirs of his Life and Writings,* ed. David Ramsay, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: JO. and JA. Fairbairn and A. Guthrie, 1790), 5: 145.
[286] Tobias Smollett, *The Miscellaneous Works of Tobias Smollett with Memoirs of his Life and Writings,* 4th ed., ed. Robert Anderson, 6 vols. (Edinburgh: Silvester Doig et. al, 1811), 1: 73.
[287] Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, 3rd ed., ed. Eric Partridge (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1963), 354.

abuse, which is illustrated in Tables 34 and 35: the former is a flyting poem, which illustrates ritualized scatological insults between Alexander Montgomerie and the Laird of Pollart, and the latter is a satire poem by Edward Guilpin, and its purpose is a "reflection of the manners and customs and 'characters' and talk of the later years of the Elizabethan age."[288] However, Table 36 illustrates its usage in as a term connoting *bad* in a religious work, which is from Christopher Cartwrights's emendation of Thomas Bayly's *Certamen Religiosum* book about a "conference…betwixt the late King and the Marquesse of Worcester, a stiffe defender of the Romish Religion,"[289] in which he "[doubted] the authenticity of the conference because it [was] too favorable to the Catholic Church"[290] and felt that the original text left "the Reader…naked, and unfurnished with any Armes and Weapons, wherewith either to defend himselfe, or to offend his adversary."[291] This last example illustrates that its usage may not have been related to register until the at least 18th century.

However, Table 37 illustrates that it was still used in use in medical texts in the first half of the 18th century, which is a collection of medicinal recipes which were collected and experimented upon, "having found that frequently [the prescriptions] have relieved those who used them, and sometimes strangely out-done Expectation."[292] This

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[288] Edward Guilpin, *Skialetheia of Edward Guilpin, 1598*, ed. Alexander B. Grosart (Manchester: Published for the subcribers by Charles E. Simms, 1878), vii.
[289] Cartwright and Bayly, *Certamen Religiosum,* A2r.
[290] "Certamen Religiosum, or, A Conference Between the Late King of England, and the Late Lord Marquesse of Worcester, Concerning Religion Together with a Vindication of the Protestant Cavse, from the Pretences of the Marquesse his last papers, which the Necessity of the Kings Affairs Denyed him Oportunity to Answer," *Early English Books Online*, last modified 2015, http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?ctx_ver=Z39.88-2003&res_id=xri:eebo&rft_id=xri:eebo:citation:11638265
[291] Cartwright and Bayly, *Certamen Religiosum*, A3v.
[292] Boyle, *Medicinal Experiments*, A2r.

also illustrates that excrement was still a frequent ingredient in medicinal remedies, which will be further illustrated in Tables 42 and 43. This usage suggests that this term either had not experienced censorship or that it was considered appropriate as a medical term.

Table 38 is from Tobias Smollett's *Sir Lancelot Greaves*, which was written as "an English Don Quixote,…[but he] seems to have been aware that his *Sir Launcelot Greaves* must appear to a great disadvantage after the Don Quixote of Cervantes" as he wrote an answer to possible objections in a dialogue in the tale.[293] However, critics have stated that "he has not attained in an equal degree the moral purposes of this species of romance; and, excepting the character of the heroine, he has not exhibited a faithful picture of life and manners in England at the time he wrote."[294] Still, the usage of *turd* in this text illustrates that although the term was considered inappropriate for public discourse due to the elision of letters, it was still used to achieve Smollett's desired rhetorical effect in illustrating the "inelegance" of the knight in question, and it may have been more acceptable in the original medium printed, which was originally "rinted in detached portions, in the monthly numbers of the *British Magazine,* or *Monthly Repository*, for 1760 and 1761."[295]

Just as telling as the usage in Table 38, Table 39 illustrates letter elision in Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*. Grose's argument for creating a dictionary of vulgar terms was that:

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[293] Smollett, *Miscellaneous Works,* ed. Robert Anderson, 1: 74.
[294] Smollett, *Miscellaneous Works,* ed. Robert Anderson, 1: 75.
[295] Smollett, *Miscellaneous Works,* ed. Robert Anderson, 1: 73.

> The many vulgar allusions and cant expressions that so frequently occur in our common conversation and periodical publications, make a work of this kind extremely useful, if not absolutely necessary, not only to foreigners, but even to natives resident at a distance from the metropolis, or who do not mix in the busy world; without some such help, they might hunt through all the ordinary Dictionaries, from Alpha to Omega, in search of the words.[296]

Moreover, he stated that "the fashionable words, or favourite expressions of the day, also find their way into our political and theatrical compositions";[297] This means that although the term started to be censored in some publications to some extent, it still appeared in magazines and spoken speech. However, this term did not appear in the 1785 version of the text, but it was included in the revised edition of 1796CE, which could mean that either it was not included in the original version due to error or that its taboo was not as high as other terms included in the text.

Table 40. Example from Phillip Stubbes' *Anatomy of the Abuses in England in Shakspere's Youth*, 1583CE.[298]

EME:	*Therefore would I wish euery man of what office, function, or calling soeuer he be, if he be not able to discharge his dutie in the same, to giue it ouer, and not for greedinesse of a little* ***mucke*** *or* ***dung*** *of the earth.*

Table 41. Example from Isaac Barrow's *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions*, 1678CE.[299]

EME:	*How can he be rich, who is destitute of the most needfull accommodations of life; who constantly feedeth on the coursest and most sordid fare, (the dust of pelf, the* ***dung*** *of sensuality).*

[296] Grose, *Classical Dictionary*, ii.
[297] Grose, *Classical Dictionary*, ii.
[298] Phillip Stubbes, *Phillip Stubbes's Anatomy of the Abuses in England in Shakspere's Youth, A.D. 1583*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall, 2 vols., New Shakespeare Society, Series 6, 4, 6, 12 (London: N. Trübner & Co., 1882), 2: 95.
[299] Isaac Barrow, *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions*, ed. Thomas Barrow (London: E. Flesher for Brabazon Aylmer, 1678), 63.

Table 42. Example from Robert Boyle's *Medicinal Experiments*, 1731CE.[300]

EME:	*In the mean time, take a handful of fresh sheeps-**dung**, and let it steep in about a Quart of strong Ale in a moderate Heat, till the Liquor be fully impregnated with the Virtue of the **Dung**.*

Table 43. Example from Robert Boyle's *Medicinal Experiments*, 1731CE.[301]

EME:	*To clear the Eyes, even from Films. Take Paracelsus's Zebethum Occidentale, (viz. human **Dung**) of good Colour and Consistence, dry it slowly till it be pulverable; then reduce it into an impalpable Powder, which is to be blown once, twice, or thrice a Day, as occasion shall require, into the Patient's Eyes.*

Table 44. Example from James-Henry-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Studies of Nature*, 1799CE.[302]

EME:	*Now this **dung** was entirely the produce of the fishes on which those fowls constantly fed.*

For the usage of *dung,* it appears that this term was not considered as taboo as *turd*. Tables 40 and 41 illustrate its use for the connotation in the semantic field of *bad* in describing worldly "evils," the former from Phillip Stubbes' *Anatomy of the Abuses in England in Shakspere's Youth* in which he "[deals] with real abuses in the Life of his time, demanding that Justice be dealt to the Poor as fairly as to the Rich; that endowments be kept for the Poor who dezerve them, and not jobd in favour of the monied folk who abuze them"[303] and the latter from Isaac Barrow's *Sermons Preached upon Several Occasions*, which are "Studies in Divinity…[and] Sermons."[304] This suggests that it was acceptable to use in religious texts (which will be further illustrated in Tables 56 and 57), which somewhat illuminates register.

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[300] Boyle, *Medicinal Experiments*, 112.
[301] Boyle, *Medicinal Experiments*, 11.
[302] James-Henry-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Studies of Nature,* trans. Henry Hunter, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (London: C. Dilly in the Poultry, 1799), 1: 262.
[303] Stubbes, *Anatomy of the Abuses*, 2: xi-xii.
[304] Barrow, *Sermons*, A2r.

Furthermore, this term was again used in Robert Boyle's *Medicinal Experiments* (Tables 42 and 43), which further illuminates register. Moreover, human excrement was used in medicinal recipes (Table 43), as "in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, corpse medicines and body fluids [featured] in family recipes,"[305] as had been done in OE and ME, which may suggest that taboos towards excrement may have had more to do with propriety and proper behavior and speech in the public sphere rather than disgust towards fecal matter. In addition, the usage data from Table 44 from James-Henry-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Studies of Nature*, which is essentially a nonfiction work on the study of nature "to be relished and admired by Readers of every description,"[306] suggests that from the intended wide readership, *dung* was considered a relatively neutral term for excrement.

Table 45. Example from John Hollybush's translation of *A Most Excellent and Perfecte Homish Apothecarye*, 1561CE.[307]

EME:	*Take whyte dogges **dyrte** thre ounces, Dittanye beaten pouder an ounce, grene wormwood brayed sinal an ounce, halfe an ounce of barly floure: mixe these altogether with hony.*

Table 46. Example from Thomas Fuller's *The Holy State*, 1642CE.[308]

EME:	*And though some count a Jesting lie to be like the **dirt** of oysters, which (they say) never stains, yet is it a sinne in earnest.*

[305] Richard Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires: The History of Corpse Medicine from the Renaissance to the Victorians* (London: Routledge, 2011), 2.
[306] James-Henry-Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Studies of Nature,* , 1: A3r.
[307] Hieronymous Brunschwig, *A Most Excellent and Perfecte Homish Apothecarye or Homely Physik Booke, for All the Grefes and Diseases of the Bodye, Translated out the Almaine Speche into English by Ihon Hollybush,* trans. John Hollybush, (Cologne: Arnold Birckman, 1561), 14r.
[308] Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State* (Cambridge: John Williams, 1642), Bk. 5, chap. 12, 406.

Table 47. Example from Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man: In Epistles to a Friend*, 1734CE.[309]

EME:	*Is yellow **Dirt** the passion of thy life?* *Look but on Gripus, or on Gripus' Wife,* *If Parts allure thee, think how Bacon shin'd,* *The wisest, brightest, meanest of Mankind.*

Regarding *dirt,* Table 45 is from John Hollybush's translation of *A Most Excellent and Perfecte Homish Apothecarye*, which is a medical text translated from German into English. Here, we see the usage of *dirt* to refer to excrement again as a medicinal ingredient. In the same line, Table 46 again illustrates the usage of dirt to refer to excrement, which text is from Thomas Fuller's *The Holy State* and whose subject matter is "Holinesse in the latitude thereof falling under the cognizanse of a Divine,"[310] which demonstrates the usage of *dirt* in a religious text, perhaps illuminating its ability to appear across different registers. Lastly, Table 47 is from the Fourth Epistle of Alexander Popes *An Essay on Man: In Epistles to a Friend*, which was "intended to form a part of the prelude to a much larger survey of human experience" and "achieved great success in Britain and abroad."[311] This last example illustrates its use in literature, further supporting the premise that this term may have been a co-occurring neutral term on the level of *dung.*

[309]Alexander Pope, *An essay on man. In epistles to a friend*, 2nd ed. (Dublin: S. Powell, 1734), Epistle IV, 18, line 269. Here, *dirt* is used figuratively to express worthlessness, though in this context its use is specifically to matter extracted from the earth (perhaps gold because of the reference to color) and not necessarily to *dung*, per se.
[310] Fuller, *The Holy State*, A3r.
[311] Pat Rogers, *The Alexander Pope Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004), 118-19.

Table 48. Example from a letter from "The Brethren of the Charter House in Axeholm to the Prior of Shene" (British Museum MS Cotton. Cleop. E. IV, f. 97), 1538CE. [312]

EME:	*Also, our husbandrye is not lokyd upon, our lond is not tylde,* ***muke*** *is not led, our corne lyth in the barn, sum is threshte, and [sum is husbo]ndyd, and mych is yit to threshe, and taketh hur[t] with vermyn.*

Table 49. Example from Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*, 1786CE. [313]

EME:	*What brings my bairn this gate sae air at the morn? Is there nae* ***muck*** *to lead, to thresh nae corn?*

With regard to *muck,* Table 40 again comes from Phillip Stubbes' religious text, *Anatomy of the Abuses in England in Shakspere's Youth*. In addition, Table 48 is from a letter from monastic members of the Charter House in Axeholm to the Prior of Shene, written to "[entreat] his assistance, and complaining of the misconduct of their prior in conveying away the property of the house."[314] Lastly, Table 49 is from Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*, an 18th century Scottish Pastoral play with musical accompaniment.[315] These examples, the first from a religious text, the second from a religious play, the third from a personal communication between religious persons, and as a gloss in Table 33 (William Somner's dictionary), demonstrate the usage of *muck* as acceptable in religious texts and scholarly works, and therefore appropriate for both religious and scholarly audiences, suggesting register and attitude towards this term.

[312] Thomas Wright, ed., "The Bretheren of the Charter House in Axeholm to the Prior of Shene," *Three Chapters of Letters Relating to the Suppression of Monasteries* (London: Published for the Camden Society by John Bowyer Nichols and Son, 1843), xii – xiii, 174, 176.
[313] Allan Ramsay, *The Gentle Shepherd by Allan Ramsay: With Original Music, to Which are Added, the Familiar Epistles, and a Complete Glossary* (Perth: J. Brown, 1786), act 2, sc. 3, p. 28.
[314] Wright, "The Bretheren of the Charter House," xiii.
[315] Ramsay, *The Gentle Shepherd*, iii.

Table 50. Example from John Dryden's *The Medall: A Satyre against Sedition*, 1682CE.[316]

EME:	*Those let me curse; what vengeance will they urge,* *Whose* ***Ordures*** *neither Plague nor Fire can purge;* *Nor sharp Experience can to duty bring,* *Nor angry Heav'n, nor a forgiving King!*

Table 51. Example from Conradus Gesner, Thomas Moffet, and Edward Topsell's *The History of Four-footed Beasts*, 1685CE.[317]

EME:	*The same also very much commends honey mingled or kneaded with the* ***ordure*** *of a young Infant, to cure the dullness of the sight, and the white spots in the eye.*

For *ordure,* Table 50 is from John Dryden's satirical poem, *The Medall: A Satyre against Sedition*, which was dedicated to the Whig party,[318] was intended for a public audience, and his style of writing evidently "[gave] satire shape, variety, and appealing public urgency for private concerns."[319] In contrast, Table 51 is from Conradus Gesner, Thomas Moffet, and Edward Topsell's *The History of Four-footed Beasts*, which is a history of animals (and insects), and in the case of bees, some medicinal uses of animal products. Table 50 illustrates the usage of *ordure* as an acceptable term to use in the public sphere of literature, whereas Table 51 illustrates its use in a history text with medicinal examples. This illustrates the use of *ordure* in line with *dirt's* and *dung's* usage.

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[316] John Dryden, *The Medall: A Satyre Against Sedition* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1682), 12.
[317] Conradus Gesner, Thomas Moffet, and Edward Topsell, *The History of Four-footed Beasts and Serpents…Whereunto is now Added, The Theater of Insects; or, Lesser Living Creaters…*, revised ed., ed. John Rowland (London: G. Sawbridge, 1658), 911.
[318] Dryden, *The Medall,* A2r.
[319] Howard D. Weinbrot, *Eighteenth-Century Satire: Essays on Text and Context from Dryden to Peter Pindar* (1998, repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 1.

Table 52. Example from William Dunbar's "The Flyting of Dumbar and Kennedie," 1508CE.[320]

EME:	*Evill schryvin, wanthryvin, not clene na curius,* *A myten full of flyting, flyrdom like,* *A crabbit, scabbit, euill facit messan tyke,* *A **schit** but wit, schir and iniurius.*

Table 53 Example from Alexander Montgomerie's "Ane Flytting or Invective be Capitane Alexander Montgomerie aganis the Laird of Pollart," 1585CE.[321]

EME:	*Schort mischappin **schit** that schuip sick ane swnȝie,* *Als proud as ȝe prunȝie ȝour pen salbe plukkit.* *Cum kis quhair I cuckit and change me þat cwnȝie.* *Ȝour gruntill lyk grunȝie is gracles and gukkit.*

Table 54. Example from *The Gentleman's Study; In Answer to the Lady's Dressing-Room,* 1733CE.[322]

EME:	*Nor was it lessen'd e'er a-bit,* *Nor overcome by stink of **S—T**,* *Which in the Pot, and round about* *The Brim, and Sides, he squirted out.*

Table 55. Example from Francis Grose's *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue,* 1785CE.[323]

EME:	***S—T** Sack, a dastardly fellow.*

Last, but certainly not least, Tables 52 – 55 illustrate the usage of *shit,* which follows the usage trajectory of *turd* to some degree. Both Tables 52 and 53 are from flyting poems, the former by William Dunbar and the latter again by Alexander Montgomerie, and both examples illustrate usage of *shit* as a scatological insult. Table 54 is from a poem printed in *The Dublin Magazine*, which "[contains] several pieces of Wit

[320] William Dunbar, "Schir Iohine the Rose, ane Thing There is Compild: The Flyting of Dumbar and Kennedie," *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. Priscilla Bawcutt, 2 vols., Association for Scottish Literary Studies 27-28 (Glasgow: ASLS, 1998), 1: 216, lines 493-96.
[321] Montgomerie, "The Last and Thrid Flytting," 1: 142.
[322] *The Dublin Magazine: or, The Gentleman's New Miscellany…* (Dublin: James Hoey, 1733), 22.
[323]Grose, *Classical Dictionary*. It is interesting that Grose chose to include the compound "S—T Sack" but not "shit" itself.

and Humour never printed before, together, with the most Select and entertaining Poems, & that have been Publish'd for Some Years Past";[324] this example illustrates the movement towards letter elision when using the term *shit,* demonstrating another use of an offence word for rhetorical effect but amended for a public audience. The last example is from Grose's vulgar dictionary, and it is interesting that some form of *shit* was included in this dictionary, but there was no listing for *shit* meaning excrement specifically. Moreover, an entry was not entered at the time of *turd*, although *shit* is used in the accompanying illustrative example. This may indicate that this term was more heavily tabooed than *turd*, which follows from the usage pattern in the next few centuries.

It is interesting to note here that although the term *shit* was remodeled in Table 54, the accompanying verb "squirted" was not euphemized and no letters were elided; for PDE speakers, this verb is perhaps more graphic and impolite now when used in this context due to visual representation than the term *shit*. This shows that although the term itself was beginning to show signs of taboo, associated verbs may have not yet been contaminated by negative taboo connotations.

2.2.3.3 Usage

From the forgoing data of the exemplified excrement terms, is readily apparent that a taboo towards excrement—perhaps particularly human excrement[325]—and the

[324] *Dublin Magazine*, title page.
[325] It appears that *dung* was rarely used to refer to human excrement and referred primarily to animal excrement, whereas the other terms were frequently used as terms of abuse or used to refer to human excrement. It may be the case that because of their use in abuse, "polite" society may have also rejected these terms based on their usage in insults. However because of William Somner's treatment of the terms in a dictionary, it is possible that negative connotations started to become associated with the meaning of these terms vs. the usage of these terms (i.e. insults).

terms *turd* and *shit* specifically, started to develop during the latter part of this period as speakers found it necessary to either elide letters, to substitute non-alphanumeric characters (i.e. *&$!-), or to avoid the terms altogether, which may explain some of the explosion in terminology in that speakers may have sought terms that seemed to be more polite, not yet bearing a taboo taint.[326] This trend grew over the years for *shit* especially so that although there were still instances of it in the written record during the 16th century, it became unpopular in the 17th and 18th centuries, and it seems that the trend during the late EME period was to elide letters to avoid the term altogether or.

In contrast, it seems that throughout this period and into PDE (discussed below) there were many instances of letter elision for *turd*, but there were also just as many instances in which the term was spelled out.[327] This would suggest that this term did not have as negative of a connotation as *shit*, which is interesting considering that *shit* wasn't used nearly as often as *turd* or *dung* in the ME period, which might indicate either register, term popularity, or connotation. Of interest and in support of this hypothesis, in Samuel Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* published 1755CE, *turd* appears in the text—with all letters present—but *shit* is omitted entirely.[328] Lastly, it is important to note that although *dung, muck, dirt,* and *ordure* were also a part of the semantic field of *bad*, there is no instance of letter elision throughout the history of these words, which

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[326] A remodeled variant of the dysphemistic term that usually has some phonological similarity (i.e. shoot). Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words,* 39.
[327] See Jonathon Green, *Green's Dictionary of Slang*, 3 vols. (London: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd., 2010), 2: 1794.
[328] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: In Which the Words are Deduced from their Originals,…A History of the Language, and an English Grammar* (1755; repr., New York, AMS Press Inc., 1967). *Dung, dirt, muck,* and *ordure* also appear in this text, and predictably none of their letters are elided.

indicates that their connotations were not as negative as *shit* and *turd* and may indicate register and popularity.[329]

Finally, the terms illustrated were taken from the genres of literature, religious texts, glossaries, medical texts, letters, magazines, and history texts. However as aforementioned, over the years certain terms took on taboo connotations and letters or terms were elided, so while earlier usage may not have necessarily differentiated between registers, it seems that in the later part of the EME period books meant for wide public consumption (i.e. literature and glossaries) necessarily amended the offending terms, though still using them for rhetorical effect, and other genres chose other terms.

2.2.3.4 Comparative Model

Although John Wyclif translated the bible, all versions of it were banned by the Catholic Church, and so was translating the bible into the vernacular. In fact, John Tyndale was the first to translate the bible in approximately 1526CE[330] "since the banned Middle English Wycliffite versions of the late fourteenth century," and it was the first translation that was made "from the Greek of the New Testament and the Hebrew of the Old Testament."[331] However, he did not live to see its completion as he was arrested and tried for heresy, and so part of it "was published posthumously after he was burnt as a heretic at Vilovorde, near Brussels, in 1536."[332] This did not, however, stem the tide of bible translation as "ironically…the very year that Tyndale was executed, the English

[329] Future corpus research is recommended to determine register and connotation for comparison.
[330] Edward Riches de Levante, ed., *The Hexaglot Bible: Comprising the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments in the Original Tongues…*, 6 vols. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1906), 1: cxxxvi.
[331] Allan K. Jenkins and Patrick Preston, *Biblical Scholarship and the Church: A Sixteenth-century Crisis of Authority* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007), 83.
[332] Jenkins and Preston, *Biblical Scholarship*, 83.

clergy were petitioning King Henry VIII for an English Bible, and it was in effect Tyndale's translations that formed the basis of successive English versions."[333] This is perhaps why the examples in Tables 56 and 57 are very similar. However, most importantly is the fact that *dung* is used throughout, following Wyclif's later version (see Tables 28 and 29). Based on this data, it seems that *dung* was a popular term during this time period, perhaps due to neutral connotations.

Table 56. Example from Exodus 29:14.

MSS		Text
1	John Tyndale's Translation of the Bible, 1537CE.[334]	*But the flesh of the oxe & his skynne and hys **donge** shalte thou bourne wyth fyre wythout thee hoste, for it is a synne offerynge.*
2	The Authorized Version, 1611CE.[335]	*But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his **dung**, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering.*

Table 57. Example from Luke 13:8.[336]

MSS		Text
1	John Tyndale's Translation of the Bible, 1534CE.	*And he answered and sayde vnto him: lorde let it alone this yeare also, till I digge rounde about it, and **donge** it to se whether it will beare frute.*
2	Thomas Cranmer's Great Bible, 1539CE.	*And he answered and sayde vnto hym: Lorde, let it alone thys yeare also, tyll I dygge rounde about it, and **donge** it, to se whether it will beare frute.*
3	The Geneva Version, 1557CE.	*And he answered, and sayd vnto him, Lord let it alone this yere also, tyl I dygge round about it, and **donge** it.*

[333] Jenkins and Preston, *Biblical Scholarship*, 83.
[334] John Tyndale, *The Byble Whych is All the Holy Scripture: in Whych are Contayned the Old and Newe Testament, Truelye and Purely Translated into Englishe, 1537*, ed. Thomas Matthewe (London: Thomas Raynalde and William Hyll, 1549).
[335] de Levante, *The Hexaglot Bible*, 1:243. "It has been estimated that some 84 percent of his New Testament and around 76 of his Old Testament translations found their way into the King James Version of 1611 and gave to the English language many of its familiar expressions," Jenkins and Preston, *Biblical Scholarship*, 83-84; see also John Nielson and Royal Skousen, "How Much of the King James Bible is William Tyndale's? An Estimation Based on Sampling," *Reformation* 3 (1998): 49–74.
[336] Miles Coverdale, et al., *The English Hexapla*.

Table 57. continued.

4	The Douay-Rheims Version, 1582CE.	*But he ansvvering saith to him, Lord, let it alone this yere also, vntil I digge about it, and* ***dung*** *it.*
5	The Authorized Version, 1611CE.[337]	*And he answering, said vnto him, Lord, let it alone this yeere also, till I shall digge about it, and* ***dounge*** *it.*

2.2.4 Present-Day English's *Shitstorm*

2.2.4.1 American Context

"It is an interesting speculation to reflect on how America might have developed linguistically in the nineteenth century had convicts continued to be transported [here], instead of being 'marinated' (after the American War of Independence) to Australia."[338]

Just as the EME period had opposing trends of usage between the beginning and end of the period, such is the case in PDE. The Victorian period, roughly the 19th century, was marked by concerns about propriety and anxiety about social and linguistic taboos, which bled into the 20th century. However, this is not to say that this was a uniform approach to language as

> The English-speaking settler populations which established themselves in the various corners of 'the New World' varied greatly in terms of their linguistic mores, from the staid and dignified Puritan sexts of the Pilgrim Fathers to the verbally coarse convicts transported to Botany Pay. These founders and pioneers set the tone, whether restrained, flamboyant or mixed, for the subsequent verbal style of their speech communities.[339]

Furthermore after the American Revolution, America's "pioneering spirit"[340] with regard to Manifest Destiny meant that "schools were few and rudimentary,"[341] which produced

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[337] de Levante, *The Hexaglot Bible*, 5: 433.
[338] Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History*, 165.
[339] Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History*, 164.
[340] Hughes, *Swearing: A Social History*, 165.
[341] Henry Mencken, *American Language*, 4th ed., 28th printing (1919; repr., New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 133.

"a wild and lawless development of the language…and many of the uncouth words and phrases that it brought to birth gradually forced themselves into more or less good usage."[342] As Mencken states, "the early Americans showed that spacious disregard for linguistic nicety which has characterized their descendants ever since,"[343] which may be somewhat of an overgeneralization as American English also struggled with anxiety over linguistic and behavioral propriety in the Victorian period, but it is true it was not until relatively recently that American English was considered an authoritative variety in its own right. In fact, "of the more serious American writers, the first to explore the literary possibilities of the national language was Walt Whitman."[344] Whitman said of his poetry collection *Leaves of Grass* that it was "only a language experiment—that it [was] an attempt to give the spirit, the body, the man, new words, new potentialities of speech—an American, a cosmopolitan (the best of America is the best cosmopolitanism) range of self-expression."[345] Furthermore saying of his projected *American Primer* project, published posthumously, "it does not suggest the invention but describes the growth of an American English enjoying a distinct identity."[346]

Besides the American Revolution and subsequent years of westward movement, WWI and WWII in the 20th century, the globalization of the English language from the 16th century through today, the 20th century sexual revolution, the development of modern media and film, and the explosion from technological advancement in 19th, 20th,

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[342] Mencken, *American Language*, 138.
[343] Mencken, *American Language*, 117.
[344] Mencken, *American Language*, 73.
[345] Walt Whitman, *An American Primer by Walt Whitman: With Facsimiles of the Original Manuscript,* ed. Horace Traubel (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1904), viii-ix.
[346] Whitman, *An American Primer*, v.

and 21st centuries (especially the current Digital Age) have helped contribute to the changes in language use. This is certainly evident in usage and the influx of terminology to circumlocute terminology associated with more severe taboo connotations. As aptly put by Henry Mencken, "thus the American, on his linguistic side, likes to make his language as he goes along, and not the hard work of the schoolmarm can hold the business back."[347]

2.2.4.2 Terms

As such, the following data (Tables 59 and 60) will illustrate both terms that have come into and left the language (as terms for excrement) and the approximate dates of those movements.[348] Table 58 gives a brief EME to PDE translation. Lastly, examples will be provided for *shit*, *turd, dung, excrement, feces*, and *poop* specifically, along with usage data for *shit*, *turd,* and *dung* for comparison purposes.

Table 58. EME to PDE Orthographic Translation.

EME to PDE Translation	
EME	PDE
dung-hep	dung-heap
midding	midden
squirte	squirt

[347] Mencken, *American Language*, 92.
[348] Not all current euphemistic terms are included as scatological humor and fecal matter taboo circumlocution are quite popular in PDE and the creative euphemistic expressions are numerous, ever-changing with popularity, and difficult to locate outside of anecdote.

Table 59. PDE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement.[349]

PDE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement				
Language of Origin	Terms	Meaning	First Known Use	Last Known Use
MO	argol	dried cow-dung used as fuel in Tartary	1856	1883
PDE	Aztec hop	diarrhea	1962	PDE
PDE	biggie*	excrement, feces	1953	PDE
PDE	BM	bowel movement	1911	PDE
PDE	bowel movement	a motion of the bowels	1891	PDE
PDE	buffalo-chips	dried dung of the American bison, used as fuel	1840	PDE
GR	coprolite	a stony, roundish fossil, consisting of the petrified excrement of an animal	1829	PDE
PDE	cow pie	a piece of dried cattle dung	1939	PDE
ME	crap*	excrement, defecation; rubbish, nonsense, something worthless, inferior or disgusting	1846	1964
Unknown	crapping	the act of defecation	1846	PDE
AF	croteys	the globular dung or excrement of hares, etc.	1425	1807
L	defecation*	the discharging of feces	1830	PDE
L	dejecta	castings, excrements	1887	1887
OF & L	dejection*	fecal discharge, excrement, evacuation of the bowels, fecal discharge	1605	PDE
ML	diarrhea*	a disorder consisting in the too frequent evacuation of too fluid feces, sometimes attended with gripping pains	1398	PDE
Unknown	dingleberry*	dried fecal matter attached to the hair of the anus	1950	PDE
ON	dirt*	excrement; as the type of anything worthless; as term of abuse	1300	PDE
PDE	doings	feces	1957	2000

[349] Terms, definitions, and dates were gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd ed., The Oxford English Dictionary: Historical Thesaurus*, and Green, *Dictionary of Slang*. Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.

Table 59. continued.

Unknown	dooky*	feces, excrement	1965	PDE
OE	doo*	excrement, feces, usually with identifying word (i.e. dog-doo)	1930	PDE
PDE	doo-doo*	feces, excrement; nonsense, rubbish; in phrases where 'shit' would be more usual	1954	PDE
PDE	doody	feces, excrement	?	PDE
OE	dropping*	dung of animals	1596	PDE
OE	dung*	excrementitious and decayed matter employed to fertilize the soil, manure; the excrement or feces of animals; applied to that which is morally filthy or defiling, or to matter that is vile, contemptible, or loathsome	1160	PDE
ME	dung-heap/ dunghill*	a pile of manure, a dunghill, a pile of refuse or trash; a vile thing, a stinking mess	1325	PDE
PDE	dump*	an act of defecation	1942	PDE
EME	dunging*	dropping of excrement	1607	1830
L	evacuation*	evacuated or excreted matter	1625	PDE
F & L	excrement	feces	1541	PDE
L	excreta	excreted matters, the waste expelled from the animal body, now often limited to the feces and urine	1857	PDE
PDE	excretes	anglicized form of excreta, feces	1883	1883
PDE	excreting	the act of defecation	1849	PDE
PDE	fecal matter	feces	?	PDE
F	feculence*	feces	1733	1733
OF & L	feces*	waste matter that is discharged from the bowels; excrement	1625	PDE
L	fimus	feces	?	PDE

Table 59. continued.

OF	flux*	an abnormally copious flowing of blood, excrement, etc., from the bowels or other organs	1382	PDE
OF	fewmets	the excrement (of a deer)	1400	1872
G	frass	the excrement of larvae	1854	PDE
SP	guano*	a natural manure found in great abundance on some sea-coasts	1604	PDE
OE	gurry*	diarrhea	1523	1881
Unknown	jakes*	excrement, filth	1847	1888
PDE	jobby*	feces	1981	PDE-UK
OF	lask*	looseness of the bowels, diarrhea	1542	1803
L	lax*	looseness of the bowels, diarrhea (in men and cattle)	1529	1877
OF	lesses	the dung of a ravenous animal, as a wild board, wolf, or bear	1425	1807
F & L	lientary	a form of diarrhea, in which the food passes through the bowels partially or wholly undigested	1398	PDE
ME	looseness*	laxity(of the bowels, especially as a morbid symptom, diarrhea, and attack of diarrhea	1586	PDE
EME	manure*	dung, excrement	1532	PDE
AN	mess*	excrement, esp. that of an animal deposited in an inappropriate place	1903	PDE
F	merde*[350]	excrement, dung	1922	PDE
ON	midden*	a dunghill, a dung heap	1425	PDE-UK
OE	mixen*	a place where dung and refuse are put, a dunghill, a midden, a heap of dung, compost, etc., used for manure, dung and other refuse from cowsheds	950	PDE-UK?

[350] Reintroduced into the language for literary purposes.

Table 59. continued.

PDE	Montezuma's revenge	diarrhea suffered by travelers, especially in Mexico	1960	PDE
AN	motion*	a bowel movement	1602	PDE-UK?
ON	muck*	dung, excrement, especially the dung of farm animals used for manure; worldly wealth, money, esp. regarded as sordid, corrupting, etc.; a person or thing regarded as contemptuous, sordid, or worthless	1268	PDE
ME	muting	defecation (of a hawk or other bird), a dropping of a bird	1475	PDE
PDE	number two*	euphemism for an act of defecation, feces	1902	PDE
AN	office*	the function or action of defecating or urinating, excretion	1395	1836
OE	opening*	an evacuation of the bowels	1679	PDE-UK?
OF	ordure*	excrement, dung; that which corrupts, defiles, or fouls morally, obscene language, writing action, etc.	1390	PDE
AN	passage*	the action or an act of defecation (or urination), feces	1681	1875
AN	pellets*	a rounded dropping of a small animal, especially a soft, moist dropping expelled by a rabbit or similar	1884	PDE
Unknown	pooh*	excrement, feces; impatience, contempt, disdain	1960	PDE
Unknown	pooh-pooh*	feces, excrement, a lump of excrement	1960	PDE
Unknown	poop*	an act of breaking wind or of defecation, feces; nonsense	1888	PDE
F	prairie coal	dried dung used as fuel	1889	PDE

Table 59. continued.

OF	purgation*	the emptying of the bowels, esp. by the use of a laxative	1387	PDE
GR	scat*	dung, droppings	1950	PDE
MLG	scouring*	the state or fact of being purged, a looseness or flux of the bowels, diarrhea, especially as a disease in livestock	1575	PDE?
OE	sharn	dung, especially dung of cattle	825	PDE-UK
PDE	shinola*	euphemism for 'shit'	1944	PDE
OE	shit*	excrement from the bowels, dung, a piece of excrement; an offensive or despicable person, a person whose behavior is regarded as obnoxious	900-950	PDE
OE	shite*	excrement, term for bad	1733	PDE-UK, AUS, NZ
ME	shiting	the act of defecation; feces	1386	PDE
EME	sir-reverence/ surreverence*	human excrement, a piece or lump of this	1592	1840
ON	skit	diarrhea in animals, especially sheep, scouring	1440	1865
EME	skitter	diarrhea, looseness or laxity of the bowels, thin excrement	1585	PDE-UK
MDu	slurry*	a mixture of manure or farmyard waste and water, manure in fluid form	1965	PDE
OF	soil*	ordure, excrement, the dung of animals used as compost	1607	1848
ME	soiling*	defecation	1943	PDE
OF	spraints	the excrement of the otter	1425	PDE-UK
MDu or MLG	squirt*	diarrhea, looseness or laxity of the bowels, thin excrement, an attack of diarrhea	1460	PDE351
Unknown	squitter	diarrhea	1664	PDE-UK?
L	stercus	feces	?	PDE

[351] Now also commonly called "hershey squirts," Dalzell and Victor, *The New Partridge Dictionary*, 1: 1137.

Table 59. continued.

OE	stool*	the action of evacuating the bowels, an act of discharging feces, a discharge of fecal matter of a specified color, consistency, etc.,	1541	PDE
EME	stooling*	the action or process of evacuating the bowels	1599	?
OE	the runs	diarrhea	1946	PDE
OE	the shits	diarrhea	1939	PDE
F	the trots	diarrhea	1808	PDE
PDE	tom-tit	rhyming slang for 'shit'; nonsense	1943	PDE
OE	turd*	a lump or piece of excrement, excrement, ordure; a type of worthlessness or vileness; in coarse abuse, also applied to a person as a term of execration or contempt	900-950	PDE
SP	turista	a form of traveller's diarrhea affecting visitors to Mexico	1970	PDE
OE	treddle	a pellet of sheep's or goat's dung	900-950	PDE-UK
EME	voiding*	excrements of person or animals	1425	PDE
EME	wherry-go-nimble	looseness of the bowels, diarrhea	1766	PDE-UK?
PDE	whoopsie*	euphemism for a lump or piece of excrement	1973	PDE

Table 60. PDE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs.[352]

PDE Semantic Field Terms: Excrement Verbs				
Language of Origin	Terms	Meaning	First Known Use	Last Known Use
Unknown	crap*	to defecate	1846	PDE
L	defecate*	to void feces	1864	PDE
ME	dung*	to drop or eject excrement	1470	PDE-UK
L	evacuate*	to empty (the stomach, bowels, or other bodily organ)	1542	PDE

[352] Terms, definitions, and dates were gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd ed.*, The Oxford English Dictionary: Historical Thesaurus*, and Green, *Dictionary of Slang*. Asterisks (i.e. *) indicate that a term is polysemous and has more associated meanings than just excrement.

Table 60. continued.

OE and ME	foul*	to drop ordure	1484	1814
OE	to go	to urinate or defecate, to go to the lavatory	1926	1475
ON	mire*	to defecate	1918	1922
AN	move*	of the bowels, to evacuate feces	1699	PDE-UK?
OF	mute	of a bird, esp. a hawk: to discharge feces, to defecate	1475	PDE-UK?
PDE	pooh*	to defecate, to soil by defecation	1975	PDE
Unknown	poop*	to defecate	?	PDE
AN	move*	of the bowels, to evacuate feces	1699	PDE-UK?
OF	mute	of a bird, esp. a hawk: to discharge feces, to defecate	1475	PDE-UK?
PDE	pooh*	to defecate, to soil by defecation	1975	PDE
Unknown	poop*	to defecate	?	PDE
AN	purge*	to eliminate or expel (waste or harmful matter, etc.) from the body or an organ; to rid one's body of waste or harmful material, to empty one's bowels (especially by taking a laxative), to cause evacuation of the bowels; to empty one's bowels	1390	PDE
AN	relieve	euphemism to defecate or urinate	1915	PDE
OE	shit*	to void excrement	1325	PDE
ON	skite	to void excrement	1449	1823
OE	stool*	to evacuate the bowels, to evacuate as excrement	1545	1843
OF	void*	of person, animals, or their organs: to discharge (some matter) from the body through a natural vent or orifice, especially through the excretory organs, to eject by excretion or evacuation,	1398	PDE

Of the 86 excrement terms from EME, 46 fell into disuse by the PDE period, which is shockingly almost exactly half. However, 50[353] terms were added, for a total of 97 terms for excrement. In contrast, 21 excrement verbs fell into disuse in PDE from the EME period, and only 7 more terms were added to the language. In addition, *gore* was lost from the language in the middle of the EME period, which means that of the original OE terms, just *dung, shit,* and *turd* survived into American PDE.[354]

Some of these terms are obviously euphemistic, but others refer to a specific type of excrement, and many of the terms are used humorously, such as *Montezuma's revenge*, which is presumably the spirit of Montezuma (the Aztec ruler defeated by Spanish conquistador Hernań Cortés) exacting revenge from the conquest of the New World on unsuspecting tourists in the form of diarrhea. The vast recycling and influx of words in the semantic field of *excrement* seems to coincide with developments of a fecal matter taboo; however, it is also indicative of scatological humor, as interlocutors find inventive and humors terms to refer to excrement.

Beyond the movement of terminology, we have seen that some of the terms for excrement developed negative connotations and were used creatively to denote the semantic field of *bad*, which is generalizing (see chapter 1). This trend further continued for *turd* and *shit*, although it seems that *dung* has specialized to refer to just animal feces. Although *turd* was the more popular term throughout the history of the English language

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[353] According to the *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd ed.. This does not take into account all possible euphemistic terms.

[354] Since we know that this semantic field has taboo connotations, we can surmise that Latinate vocabulary is used in more formal registers, such as scholarly works and medical texts. Rather, it is more informative to illustrate the usage of the last of the OE terms as these are the terms that hold the most taboo, euphemistic creativity aside.

both in the semantic field of *excrement* and outside it as a term of abuse, it is *shit* that is now more popular in uses outside of the semantic field of *excrement*. However, both terms are still now considered taboo due their ties to the semantic field of *excrement*, but *shit* holds a higher taboo, either due to connotation or because of its use in epithets, scatology and "vulgar" expressions related specifically to excrement.[355]

Returning to the data, the following will present examples for *dung* (Tables 61, 62, and 63), *turd* (Tables 64, 65, 66, and 67), and *shit* (Tables 68, 69, 70, and 71). Each group of examples will be followed by a discussion of the texts. Thereafter, Tables 72 and 73 will illustrate a comparative model of Exodus 29:14 and Luke 13:8. Lastly, the usage trends of these terms will be demonstrated in a Google Ngram in Table 74, and Tables 75, 76, and 77 will illustrate the creative uses of the term *shit.*

Table 61. Example from William Kitchiner's "A Collection of Receipts in Cookery," *The Cook's Oracle*, 1823CE.[356]

PDE: (19th Century)	*For Convulsions, or Vertigo. Take one Ounce of Juniper-Berries; two Ounces of Fresh* Seville *Orange-peel; Male-Piony Roots, three Ounces; Peacocks* ***Dung****, six Ounces; Sugar-candy, half a Pound: Infuse these in two Quarts of Rhenish, for twenty-four Hours, in hot Ashes; then let it settle; and take two Spoonfuls of this in a Glass of Angelica-water. It has done great Cures.*

Table 62. Example from Mary R. Berenbarum's *Bugs in the System: Insects and Their Impact on Human Affairs,* 1995CE.[357]

PDE: (20th Century)	*Native* ***dung*** *beetles could return less than 20% of* ***dung*** *nitrogen back to the soil. Accordingly, cattle* ***dung*** *accumulated at an alarming rate and along with this* ***dung*** *grew populations of the pestiferous busy fly* Musca vetustissima.

[355] See chapter 1, section 1.3.5.1 Cursing Types.
[356] William Kitchiner, "A Collection of Receipts in Cookery, &c.," *The Cook's Oracle: Containing Receipts…The Whole Being the Result of Actual Experiments Instituted in the Kitchen of a Physician*, 2nd American ed. (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1823), 117-18.
[357] Mary R. Berenbarum, *Bugs in the System: Insects and Their Impact on Human Affairs* (Reading, MA: Basic Books, 1995), 246.

Table 63. Example from Gerald Morris' *The Princess, the Crone, and the Dung-Cart Knight,* 2004CE.[358]

PDE: (21st Century)	*With that, the driver leaned behind him, plunged his hand deep into the **dung**, and pulling out a handful, flung it against the knight's back, where it hit with a wet smack.*

For these examples, Table 61 comes from William Kitchiner's *The Cook's Oracle*, in which he claims that his "receipts are the results of experiments carefully made and accurately and circumstantially related."[359] Although, it seems "Kitchiner had in fact plundered these and other recipes directly from a work attributed to Mary Kettilby, first published at the start of the eighteenth century, when corpse medicines still persisted in mainstream educated culture."[360] This example illustrates the use of fecal matter in medicinal remedies through the 19th century, which may have persisted only until germs were discovered and germ theory was accepted in the latter part of the 19th century. This will be discussed further in Chapter 3. Table 62 illustrates the usage of *dung* in a 20th century scholarly work, and Table 63 provides an example of *dung* in a young adult work of fiction. These examples illustrate a neutral tone appropriate for both a formal register and a young audience, for whom taboo words are restricted. This indicates that while *dung* is a member of the semantic field of *excrement*, it does not have the taboo connotations that *turd* and *shit* do.

[358] Gerald Morris, *The Princess, the Crone, and the Dung-Cart Knight* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 93.
[359] Kitchiner, "A Collection of Receipts, 31.
[360] Sugg, *Mummies, Cannibals, and Vampires*, 266.

Table 64. Example from "Peas, Beans, & Cabbages," *The Knowing Chaunter,* 1835CE.[361]

PDE: (21st Century)	*For she sit down, on my word,* *And soon brought forth a* ***t---****,* *A yard and three-quarters long.*

Table 65. Example from E.E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room,* 1922CE.[362]

PDE: (21st Century)	*The can excited my curiosity. I looked over the edge of it. At the bottom reposefully lay a new human* ***t . . d****.*

Table 66. Example from Dave Praeger's *Poop Culture: How America is Shaped by Its Grossest National Product,* 2007CE.[363]

PDE: (21st Century)	*It only hurts future toilet users and the poor employee who has to clean it up. Accepting the innocent bathroom-goer or custodian as collateral damage in the name of ideology: this is* ***turd*** *terrorism.*

Table 67. Example from Mike Halford's "Sabres Bidding Farewell to 'Turd Burger' Jerseys," *NBC: Sports* 2015CE.[364]

PDE: (21st Century)	*If nothing else, kudo to Buffalo for giving us one of the worst jerseys of all time, and the ability to use "****turd*** *burger" freely in our headlines.*

Here, Table 64 demonstrates the elision of letters in *turd,* which comes from a ditty entitled "Peas, Beans, and Cabbages" published in 1835.[365] In contrast, Table 65 comes from E. E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room* is his autobiographical "account of [his] ordeal as a prisoner at La Ferté-Mace"[366] during WWI. Table 66 is a humorous work

[361] William West, *Bawdy Songbooks of the Romantic Period,* ed. Ed Cray, 4 vols. (1834-1836; repr., London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 1: 222, lines 43-45.
[362] E.E. Cummings, *The Enormous Room* (1922; repr., New York: The Modern Library, 1934), 26.
[363] Dave Praeger, *Poop Culture: How America is Shaped by Its Grossest National Product* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2007), 133.
[364] Mike Halford, "Sabres Bidding Farewell to 'Turd Burger' Jerseys," *NBC: Sports*, last modified March 12, 2015, http://prohockeytalk.nbcsports.com/2015/03/12/sabres-bidding-farewell-to-turd-burger-jerseys/
[365] West, *Bawdy Songbooks*, 1: ix. Unfortunately, no examples of *turd* could be located for 19th century American PDE, and all examples listed by *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 3rd ed. and Green, *Dictionary of Slang* were inaccessible at the time of this study. In addition, data from Figure 73 will illuminate the status of this term's usage in the language.
[366] Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno, *E.E. Cummings: A Biography* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc., 2004), 176.

of nonfiction that investigates how "the taboos, the sophomoric jokes, the schoolyard giggling that accompany the subject and act itself of pooping are all part of a cultural and social construct that somehow has framed that most vulnerable, intimate, and equalizing fact of daily life for us all with inexplicable shame, guilt, fear and anxiety for a very long time."[367] Lastly, Table 67 is an online news article from *NBC: Sports.* All of these examples come from the general public sphere, though certainly not formal contexts, which indicates that its use in informal registers is acceptable.

Table 68. Example from *The Night Side of New York*, 1866CE.[368]

PDE: (19th Century)	*"Over there," observed the roundsman, as he pointed to a place near by, "over there is where the nigger killed the white man some time since. They called it* ***S—*** *Alley. Would you like to go over?"*

Table 69. Example from Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer,* 1934CE.[369]

PDE: (20th Century)	*The little well was slimy with* ***excrement****, which in English is* **shit**.

Table 70. Example from Robert A. Pratt's *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia,* 2002CE.[370]

PDE: (21st Century)	*When he called it in to his editor in New York, the editor was asking him questions about the riot. And I could hear Calvin saying, 'President Aderhold, he's a* ***shit****. Dean Williams, he's a* ***shit****. Registrar Danner, he's a* ***shit****; no wait a minute, hold that, he's just a clerk.'*

[367] Praeger, *Poop Culture*, 9-10.
[368] Members of the New York Press, *The Night Side of New York: A Picture of the Great Metropolis after Nightfall* (New York: J. C. Haney & Co., 1866), 98.
[369] Henry Miller, *Tropic of Cancer* (1934; repr., New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961), 64.
[370] Robert A. Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved: The Desegregation of the University of Georgia*, Paperback ed. (2002; repr., Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2005), 103.

Table 71. Example from Mollie Reilly's *"*Miley Cyrus Is Trying To 'Stir Some Sh*t Up' in Tom Cotton's Office*," The Huffington Post,* 2015CE.[371]

PDE: (21st Century)	*His remarks drew the attention of the outspoken pop star, who called on her legions of fans to "stir some **shit** up" by calling Cotton's Capitol Hill office.*

For this last set of examples, Table 68 is from an anonymous book written in the 19th century whose purpose was to "[cater] to America's fascination with its growing cities and the seamy side of urban life,"[372] which displays using taboo terms to name localities, a practice that has history in the English language.[373] However, although this book was an exposé of the "seamy side" of society, it elides the "offending" letters in *shit*, and it is unclear whether this was for rhetorical effect or whether this was the name of an actual street in New York. In addition, Tables 68 and 70 exhibit the usage of *shit* as a descriptor to illicit negative connotations, although from 2 radically different genres: Table 68 is from a novel and Table 70 is from a study that follows "the story of a dedicated group of black lawyers and plaintiffs who shared a commitment to equal justice and who, along with their white allies, were determined to break down racial barriers at the University of Georgia."[374] Furthermore, Table 70 is actually a record of spoken speech in the 1960s, which illustrates interlocutors were comfortable with this type of usage at that point and that *shit* is allowed in a scholarly text by the 21st century, if not earlier. In contrast, Table 69 is from Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, which was banned

[371] Mollie Reilly, *"*Miley Cyrus Is Trying To 'Stir Some Sh*t Up' in Tom Cotton's Office*," The Huffington Post*, U.S. ed., last modified April 2, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/04/02/miley-cyrus-tom-cotton_n_6995300.html?utm_hp_ref=politics
[372] Richard Scott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Balitmore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 238.
[373] See Shitterton and Sharnbrook, UK.
[374] Pratt, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, x.

in the United States when it was first published due to objections of obscenity and sexual content. Nevertheless, it demonstrates that *shit* was still used to refer to excrement, though this particular usage has somewhat diminished over the years in favor of creative, euphemistic uses (see Tables 75, 76, and 77). Lastly, Table 71 illustrates the use of *shit* in an online news article from *The Huffington Post*, in which the term *shit* appears in text without emendation, while letters have been elided in the title of the article.

2.2.4.3 Usage

In analyzing the preceding examples, it seems that excrement terms are somewhat separated by register, in that *shit* and *turd* may appear in formal registers if the context is appropriate, such as studies examining these terms or recording spoken speech or direct quotations. However, it seems that if these criteria are not met, then it is highly unlikely that these 2 terms will appear in formal registers. Furthermore, *dung* appears to have a neutral connotation now, as it appears in youth literature, which is notoriously censored due to cultural values about appropriate language for young adult readership. Moreover, it seems to have the same clinical, neutral connotations as Latinate terms for excrement, although it is unlikely that *dung* would appear in medical texts or registers, as they are associated with perceive prestige of Latinate terms.

With regard to usage in slang,[375] according to Jonathon Green in his *Dictionary of Slang*, there are instances in which *dung* was used to refer to "a tailor who accepts the master's terms without argument, or who works when his fellows are striking…[as] the

[375] According to Timothy Jay, slang is "language peculiar to a particular group : an informal nonstandard vocabulary composed typically of coinages, arbitrary changed words, and extravagant, forced, or facetious figures of speech," Jay, *Cursing in America*, 6. See also Jonathon Green, *The Vulgar Tongue: Green's History of Slang* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

dung is 'soft' (and disgusting), while the union man, the *flint*, is 'hard' (and admirable)."[376] However, this fell into disuse by the early 20th century.[377] With regard to *turd*, means either excrement or "an unappealing person, or object,"[378] and although there are some derivatives and idiomatic compounds, phrases, and constructions used as slang—such as turd-burglar, turdbird, turd in the punchbowl, etc.—they are not as numerous as derivatives for the term *shit*, of which Green has recorded over 450 instances (across all varieties of English, in contrast with a little over 30 of *turd's* recorded instances.[379] In addition, the term *shit* specifically has 31 recorded definitions, whereas *turd* has just 2 (as aforementioned).[380] This and the creative uses of *shit* in alternate semantic fields will be discussed further in section 2.2.4.5

2.2.4.4 Comparative Model

To complete the comparative model, 7 texts were selected to represent the PDE period: the American Bible Society's Harding's Fine Edition of the bible from 1858CE (ABS Harding); Bible Union's improved edition of The New Testament from 1865CE (ABU); the American Bible Society's 1881CE revision (ABS); the American The Cross-Reference Bible Company's American Standard Edition of the Revised Bible from 1901CE (CRBC); the American Revision Committee's 1901CE edition (ARC); the New

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[376] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 1: 1809.
[377] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 1: 1809. However, there are instances in which dung is substituted for *turd* or *shit* in slang terms, such as "to not know dung from honey" instead of "to not know shit from honey," Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 863.
[378] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 2: 1794
[379] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 856-82, 1794-96.
[380] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 854-56, 1794. See also *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed.

American Standard Bible from 2007CE (NASB); and the English Standard Version, Economy edition from 2011CE (ESV).

Table 72. Example from Exodus 29:14.

MSS		Text
1	ABS Harding, 1858CE[381]	*But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his **dung**, shalt though burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin-offering.*
2	ABS, 1881CE[382]	*But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his **dung**, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin offering.*
3	CRBC, 1901CE[383]	*But the flesh of the bullock, and its skin, and its **dung**, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin-offering.*
4	ARC, 1901CE[384]	*But the flesh of the bullock, and its skin, and its **dung**, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it is a sin-offering.*
5	NASB, 2007CE385	*But the flesh of the bull and its hide and its refuse, you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.*
6	ESV, 2011CE[386]	*But the flesh of the bull and its skin and its **dung** you shall burn with fire outside the camp; it is a sin offering.*

Table 73. Example from Luke 13:8.

MSS		Text
1	ABS Harding, 1858CE[387]	*And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and **dung** it.*

[381] American Bible Society, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments…*, Hardings' Fine ed. (Philadelphia: Jesper Harding & Son, 1858), 65.
[382] American Bible Society, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments…* (New York: American Bible Society, 1881), OT 97-98.
[383] The Cross-Reference Bible Society, *The Cross-Reference Bible Containing the Old and New Testatments…*, American Standard ed. of the Revised Bible, ed. Harold E. Monsor, et al. (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1901), 161.
[384] American Revision Committee, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments…*, Standard ed. (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1901), OT 92.
[385] *New American Standard Bible*, Outreach ed. (Anaheim, CA: Foundation Publications, Inc., 2007), 41.
[386] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version Containing the Old and New Testaments*, Economy ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 47.
[387] American Bible Society, *Holy Bible,* Hardings' Fine ed., 630.

Table 73. continued.

2	ABU, 1865CE[388]	*And he answering says to him: Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and cast in **manure**.*
3	ABS, 1881CE[389]	*And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and **dung** it.*
4	CRBC, 1901CE[390]	*And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and **dung** it.*
5	ARC, 1901CE[391]	*And he answering saith unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and **dung** it.*
7	NASB, 2007CE[392]	*And he answered and said to him, 'Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in **fertilizer**.'*
6	ESV, 2011CE[393]	*And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on **manure**.'*

In analyzing Tables 72 and 73, it appears that the editors in the late 19th and early 20th centuries changed diction of the texts very little from the Authorized Version of the bible, except in No. 2 of Table 73. In this case, they chose to use *manure*, which choice may reflect the slight difference in meaning between *manure* and *dung.* This constrasts with No. 5 of Table 72, in which the editors seemed to have been trying capture a more accurate translation of the standard Hebrew version of the bible, which translates to "innards" rather than "dung."[394] This also differs from the usage of No. 6 of Table 72, in

[388] American Bible Union, *The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ* (New York: American Bible Union, 1865), 210.
[389] American Bible Society, *The Holy Bible,* (1881), NT, 87.
[390] The Cross-Reference Bible Society, *The Cross-Reference Bible*, 1939.
[391] American Revision Committee, *The Holy Bible,* NT 83.
[392] *New American Standard Bible*, 506-07.
[393] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, 602.
[394] The Hebrew term is "pirshow," which translates as "faecal matter found in the intestines of a victim," or rather "offal." See William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* trans. Edward Robinson, ed. Francis Brown, S. R, Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, corr. ed. (1906; repr., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 831. However, the 1952 corrected edition, whose changes are "many hundreds in number," rejects the translation given in the aforementioned 1939 edition in favor of "offal as ripped out in

which the editors retained the term *dung*, suggesting that this term is neutral and approved for all audiences. Furthermore, the 21st century editions also use more current terms to capture the sense required in Table 73, although No. 5 chose "fertilizer" and No. 6 chose "manure," suggesting that these both are neutral terms.[395] From this data and the previous data for *dung*, it seems this term has lost much of its use as an abuse term and instead is employed as a neutral term for animal excrement. This is interesting because its popularity of usage for creativity seems to have declined, while *shit's* has risen exponentially (see Table 74).

In Table 74 below, an illustration of a Google Ngram which analyzes "a corpus constructed by Jean-Baptiste Michel et al. "containing about 4% of all books ever printed,"[396] we can see that *dung* seems to follow a downward trajectory in usage, whereas in 1960, *shit* increases in the amount of usage almost instantaneously and continues its assent until it levels off slightly, seemingly within the last 5 years. In addition, it seems that *turd* as hardly been used at all, though there is a miniscule rise inusage within the last 20 years, which was reflected in the difficulty in locating examples from research and the dearth of exemplars available for this study in PDE. This data illustrates the popularity of usage these terms have experienced, but it does not

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preparing victim," see William Gesenius, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament,* trans. Edward Robinson, ed. Francis Brown, S. R, Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, corr. ed. (1906; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952), xii, 831.

[395]However, "fertilizer" is likely euphemistic and an effort to sanitize the term because other versions translate this roughly as "dung," such as the Greek *kopria.* See Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament,* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 559.

[396] Jean-Baptiste Michel, et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture Using Millions of Digitized Books," Abstract, *Science* 331.6014 (January 14, 2011): 176-182 at 176.

necessarily indicate register because the Google corpus surveys all genres. Further corpus research is required to analyze genre data for term usage by genre.

Table 74. Google N-gram[397] illustrating the media usage trend of *dung, turd,* and shit from 1800 – 2008CE.[398]

2.2.4.5 *Shitlist*

As the censorship rules about *shit* appearing in media or used in public discourse has relaxed, the term has been increasingly used for creative combinations in dysphemistic euphemisms for the purposes of self-expression and style, demonstrating and ameliorative, generalizing trend of semantic change. Thus for the concluding data for this study, Tables 75 and 76 list the PDE data found in the *Green's Dictionary of Slang*[399] pertaining to American PDE in which the meaning of *shit* has been broadened to cover a range of meanings with gradation between negative, neutral, and positive connotations. As such, the data is organized by attitudinal connotation associated with use, meaning, or

[397] Jean-Baptiste Michel, et al., "Quantitative Analysis of Culture," 176.
[398] *Google Books: Ngram Viewer*, last modified 2013, https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=dung%2C+turd%2C+shit&year_start=1800&year_end=2015&corpus=15&smoothing=3&share=&direct_url=t1%3B%2Cdung%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2Cturd%3B%2Cc0%3B.t1%3B%2Cshit%3B%2Cc0
[399] Some data was gathered from personal knowledge.

intent; semantic field; and then exemplars. In addition, speakers of PDE use the term by itself and in combination with other words as adjectives, nouns, and verbs to create new adjectival connotations, compound nouns, phrasal verbs, and idiomatic phrases in order to creatively express shades of meaning in other semantic fields, of which some example terms are illustrated in Table 77.

Table 75. *Shit* data from Jonathan Green's *Dictionary of Slang*.[400]

Semantic Field		Attitudinal Connotation	Examples
1	excrement	negative	The little well was slimy with excrement, which in English is ***shit***.[401]
2	positive attributes	positive	"Michael's new BMW is the **shit**."[402]
3	person	negative/ positive/ neutral	"He's a cute little **shit**," said Fluffy.[403]
4	unpleasant situation/ problems/ difficulties	negative	Look at that. Can you believe this shit? They never pull you over at this gate, not at this time of day – and I haven't got any identification.404
5	bad/worthless/ inferior	negative	Everyone likes free shit, but we know most free shit is shit.405
6	abstraction	negative/ positive/ neutral	It's like making tables and doing welding…and making frames for mirrors and stuff. It's just shit like that.406
7	nothing, in the negative	negative	It doesn't mean shit to me and it doesn't mean shit in the world.407

[400] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 854-882. Further data was gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed.
[401] Miller, *Tropic of Cancer*, 64.
[402] Ruth Wajnryb, *Expletive Deleted: A Good Look at Bad Language* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 91.
[403] Joseph Wambaugh, *The New Centurions* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1987), 233.
[404] Thom Jones, *The Pugilist at Rest: Stories* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 85.
[405] Win Schwartau, *Shit: A Shitload of Practical Uses for the Most Flexible Word in the English Language,* Family ed. (Seminole, FL: Interpact Press, 2005), 21.
[406] Mark Halsey and James Armitage, "Incarcerating Young People: The Impact of Custodial 'Care'," *Youth Offending and Youth Justice*, ed. Monica Barry and Fergus McNeill (London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2009), 154-175 at 161.
[407] Stephen Hunter, *Time to Hunt* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1998), 258.

Table 75. conintued.

8	abusive treatment	negative	Sweeping up and packing tools away in the sun and half hour for lunch and all the guys on the site calling him kid and giving him shit about his long hair and the silver and turquoise necklace and ring he wears.408
9	communication	negative/ positive/ neutral	"You're lying to me! Don't hand me that line of shit!" Brewer barked.409
10	information	negative	But, the bottom line was, they didn't have shit on me.410
11	influence	negative/ positive/ neutral	"Can't do anything for you, pal," he said to Unger, "I'm just a guest here. I don't pull no shit."411
12	drugs	negative/ positive/ neutral	The reason I don't smoke shit is that it's a hallucinatory high.412
13	money	negative	"I figure you got plenty of shit for Tiger South and your Cuban run." "How much?" "Thirty-five, which is a yard-sale fucking price, if you want my opinion."413
14	intensification	negative/ positive	You did something tonight that was dumb as shit.414
15	gunfire	negative	"I'd guess someone is hurt. That was a lot of shit."…"Why don't they stop shooting?" I said.415
16	a criminal	negative	For one thing, the crowd was still pretty avid, and the sway the straights and the shits were mixed up over there, no sensible citizen would freely give a cop good information.416

[408] Charlie Huston, *The Shotgun Rule*, Trade Paperback ed. (New York: Ballantine Books, 2008), 71.
[409] J. L. Reynolds, *The Continent of St. Louis: The Search for Answers* (Bloomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2009), 159.
[410] Garrick Wade, *Dying for Success* (Houston: AddisonCraft Publishing Corporation, 2010), 112.
[411] Qtd. in Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 855.
[412] Lenny Bruce, "Pills and Shit: The Drug Scene," *The Portable Sixties Reader*, ed. Ann Charters (New York: Penguin Group, 2003), 377-87 at 377.
[413] James Ellroy, *The Cold Six Thousand: Underworld USA 2,* First Vintage Book ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 439.
[414] Henry Romel Guy, *Tuesday's Choice: A Novella* (Charlottesville, VA: FreedomWriter Publishing, 2011), 174.
[415] Qtd. in Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 856.
[416] Carsten Stroud, *Close Pursuit* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 41.

Table 75. continued.

17	a weapon	negative/ positive/ neutral	I roll wit my shit off safety.[417]
18	violence	negative	They try to pull this lock-down shit in Kansas and the shit would've jumped off big-time.[418]
19	HIV or AIDS	negative	"She's got the **shit**, be careful about letter her use your rig!"[419]
20	interjection to express emotion	negative/ positive/ neutral	"'Holy ***shit***! Holy **shit**! *Chuck!* Holy **shit**! You killed him!'"[420]

Table 76. Summarized analysis of s*hit* data from Jonathan Green's *Dictionary of Slang*.[421]

Semantic Field		Term(s)/Phrase(s)	Formula Examples
1	excrement	1) quantifying adjective + of + shit 2) adjectival noun(s) + shit 3) (verb 'gotta') + verb 'to take' + demonstrative + shit 4) shit + noun 5) blends 6) shit 7) shit + ing 8) demonstrative + shit 9) verb 'to have' + demonstrative + shit(s)	1) lumps of shit 2) bird shit 3) take a shit 4) shithouse 5) Mcshits, shitlets, shitsicles, etc. 6) shit 7) shitting 8) a shit 9) have the shits
2	positive attributes	1) the + (adjective) + shit	1) this is the shit

[417] Qtd. in Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 856.
[418] Qtd. in Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 856.
[419] Qtd. in Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3:856.
[420] Craig Silvey, *Jasper Jones* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 305.
[421] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 854-882. Further data was gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed.

Table 76. continued.

3	person	1) 2nd person pronoun + (adjective) + shit 2) pronoun + verb 'to be' + (a) + (adjective) + shit(s) 3) (demonstrative) + noun + verb 'to be' + (a) + shit(s) 4) (demonstrative) + (adjective(s)) + shit 5) adjectival noun(s) + shit(s)	1) you little shit 2) he's a shit 3) bureaucrats are shits 4) short shit 5) government shits
4	problems/ difficulties	1) demonstrative + (adjective) + shit 2) verb 'to be' + through + (quantifier) + (demonstrative) + shit + pronoun + verb 'to have' 3) verb 'to get' + (adjective) + shit + for + ('something') 4) noun + (of) + shit 5) (verb 'to believe') + (demonstrative) + (adjective) + shit 6) (adjective) + quantifying noun + of + shit 7) shit + of + (demonstrative) + noun 8) shit just got real 9) same shit, different day 10) when shit flies 11) when shit hits the fan 12) shit happens 13) same shit, different day 14) to be in deep shit 15) to be up shit creek (without a paddle) 16) to be shit out of luck 17) on a shitlist	1) this shit is killing me 2) been through twice the shit he has 3) get shit for this 4) shit sandwich 5) I don't believe this shit 6) all kinds of shit 7) shit of a thing

Table 76. continued.

5	bad/worthless/ inferior	1) (demonstrative) + (noun) + verb 'to be' + (adjective) + shit 2) demonstrative + (adjective) + shit 3) adjective + shit 4) (demonstrative) + noun + verb 'to be' + for + shit 5) quantifying adjective + of + shit 6) shit + noun 7) shit	1) this car is shit 2) that shit 3) pure shit 4) that picture is for shit 5) piece of shit 6) shitbag
6	abstraction	1) (demonstrative) + adjectival noun + shit 2) quantifier + of + (adjective) + shit 3) demonstrative + shit 4) quantifier + shit 5) possessive pronoun + shit 6) (adjective) + shit 7) and shit 8) shit	1) that English shit 2) a lot of shit 3) that shit 4) more shit 5) my shit 6) good shit
7	nothing, in the negative	1) NEG + verb + shit 2) verb 'to do' + (quantifying adjective) + (demonstrative) + for + shit	1) doesn't mean shit 2) did all that for shit
8	abusive treatment	1) verb + noun + shit 2) verb + shit + preposition + (pro)noun 3) verb + shit	1) give him shit 2) he's gonna get shit for this 3) she's just starting shit
9	communication	1) quantifying adjective + of + (adjective) + shit 2) (demonstrative) + adjective + shit + about + noun 3) verb 'to buy' + shit 4) demonstrative + (adjective) + shit	1) line of shit 2) that terrible shit 3) they're not gonna buy that shit 4) that shit
10	information	1) (adjective)+ (of) + shit + on + (demonstrative) + (pro)noun	1) They ain't got shit on me
11	influence	1) verb 'to pull' + shit	1) I pull some shit around here

Table 76. continued.

12	drugs	1) it + verb 'to be' + adjective + shit 2) possessive pronoun + shit 3) (demonstrative) + shit 4) quantifying adjective + of + (adjective) + shit 5) verb + shit 6) shit	1) it's good shit 2) my shit 3) the shit 4) plenty of good shit 5) smoke shit
13	money	1) quantifying adjective + of + shit 2) adjective + shit	1) worth of shit 2) more shit
14	intensification	1) (as) + verb + as shit 2) verb + the + shit + out of + (pro)noun	1) stupid as shit 2) beat the shit out of it
15	gunfire	1) (quantifying adjective) + (of) + shit	1) a lot of shit
16	a criminal	1) the shit(s)	
17	a weapon	1) (possessive pronoun) + shit	1) keep your hands off my shit
18	violence	1) the shit	
19	HIV or AIDS	1) the shit	1) she's got the shit
20	interjection to express emotion	1) holy shit 2) piece of shit 3) shit 4) fuck this shit 5) eat shit and die 6) oh shit 7) for shit's sake	

Table 77. Select Examples of other *shit* data from Jonathan Green's *Dictionary of Slang*.[422]

Semantic Field		Attitudinal Connotation	Examples
1	feeling scared	negative	shitted, to be scared shitless, to scare the living shit, shit-scared, to shit one's pants/breeches/britches
2	anal sexual intercourse	negative	shit-stabbing, to push shit uphill, shit-packer, shit-fuck

[422] Green, *Dictionary of Slang*, 3: 854-82. Further data was gathered from *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. Not all data could be analyzed due to the volume of data available. Examples are provided to illustrate the variability of semantic fields for which *shit* is used for.

Table 77. continued.

3	intoxication	negative/ positive/ neutral	shitfaced
4	terms of abuse	negative	shit-weasel, shitbag, shitball, shitcunt, shit lover, shitbird, shithead
5	occupation	negative	shitwork
6	death	negative	to get one's shit blown away
7	sincerity	negative/ positive/ neutral	I shit you not, would I shit you, I wouldn't shit you
8	stupidity	negative	shit-brained, shitbrains, shit for brains, to not know shit from Shinola, to not know from shit,
9	descriptor of place	negative/ positive	the shit, shithole
10	amount	negative/ positive/ neutral	shitload, by the shitload
11	situational control	negative/ positive	to get one's shit together, to have one's shit together, to have all one's shit in one bag
12	health	negative	to feel like shit, to feel like a pile of shit, to feel shit, to look like shit
13	feeling upset	negative	to lose one's shit, to have a shit fit, to shit bricks

It is readily apparent that *shit* still carries heavily negative connotations, but it is not necessarily tied as much to the taboo topic of defecation: Because *shit* is used as an intensifier and a general euphemism for a wide range of phenomena, it has lost some of its taboo association. That is, unless the speaker uses *shit* in reference to defecation specifically because the West now finds this topic distasteful (discussed further in Chapter 3).

This data represents a limited portrayal of the creative uses users have found for the term *shit*, as perhaps only surveys and ethnographic analyses could begin to portray the profusion of usage because semantic change and lexical gain and loss happen at a faster rate than the written language or the researcher can keep pace with. Essentially the

meanings of this term and many of the terms in the semantic field of *excrement* have clearly generalized beyond their original usage (or in some cases, have specialized, as with *dung)*, displaying both ameliorative and pejorative trends, and today they can be combined with other words in infinite ways, even functioning in different parts of speech than their original role (i.e. nouns and verbs). Such variety will likely only continue as the sociocultural climate of the West is changes, slowly relaxing its response to taboo language and allowing for creative colloquial speech innovations. This data, societal attitudes, and the relationship between these terms and speakers will be discussed at length in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3 THINKING AND TALKING ABOUT *SHIT*

3.1 Structure

From chapter 2, it is apparent that the usage of excrement terms have a varied history, which must be explained according to the cultural context. As such, the subsequent discussion will discuss the data presented in chapter 2, concluding with historical and contemporary attitudes concerning excrement and the terms in the semantic field of *excrement*. Thereafter, anthropological theories about cultural change will be examined. Lastly, the chapter will consider language change in relation to culture and discuss future research directions.

3.2 Data Analysis

Susan Signe Morrison in her book *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages* states correctly that words are clues leading to cultural understanding…[and that] "to know words enables us to see how people thought. Ways in which we discipline our thoughts and fears about the body are evident in the linguistic world we come to share as we enter language."[423] Furthermore from the data in chapter 2, it is apparent that "there is a very close link between the life of a society and the lexicon of the language spoken by it,"[424]

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[423] Susan Signe Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages: Sacred Filth and Chaucer's Fecopoetics*, New Middle Ages (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 15-16.
[424] Anna Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures through Their Key Words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1.

and the language used by a culture describes the cultural climate of that society at any particular point in history. With this in mind, the following will discuss the patterns evident in the data presented in chapter 2 that illustrate "how people thought" through the history of the English language, and the historical usage in the semantic field of *excrement.*

As illustrated, historically the OE terms for excrement did not have any negative connotations[425] and such things referred to excrement, manured land, internal organs, and other aspects relating to fecal matter (see Table 1, Chapter 2).[426] Eventually, terms took on negative connotations in ME and were broadened to be used as general terms for *bad* or *profane*, and many words were also added to the lexicon as a result of language contact and borrowing. However, the terms as yet didn't have the serious connotations that many of them do today; furthermore, Thomas W. Ross claims that the term *shit* "was so common—and not a taboo word—it was not useful, as it is today, to express disgust or invective" during the ME period,[427] which is not entirely true as its use as a term to connote negative connotations is confirmed during this period (see Table 22, Chapter 2), and in addition it seems other terms were more popular than *shit*. Still, Ross also confirms that similarly *dung* and *turd* were used either to refer explicitly to excrement or

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[425] Again, although Roberts, Kay, and Grundy in their *Thesaurus of Old English* claimed that *tord* and *gor* were used to describe "filth" and "squalor," examples of this were not found, and Bosworth did not corroborate this claim in his *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*. See Jane Roberts, Christian Kay, and Lynne Grundy, *Thesaurus of Old English*, 1:248 and Joseph Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*, 485, 1002.
[426] See Roberts, Kay, and Grundy, *Thesaurus of Old English*, 2 vols., and Bosworth, *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary*.
[427] Ross, *Chaucer's Bawdy*, 203.

were used creatively to connote negative connotations, but that neither of these terms were considered "taboo."[428]

One possible theory as to why excrement terms were borrowed into the semantic field of *bad* is because of the proliferation of its usage as a euphemism for worthlessness in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin bible translations, which was then translated into English, thus exposing English speakers to this type of usage. Another possibility that may have supported this shift is that as a commonly occurring, abundant commodity, especially in urban areas, excrement is considered a worthless nuisance[429] which people try to dispose of quickly and with the least amount of inconvenience to themselves,[430] which means that excrement is useful as a metaphor when talking about worthlessness, which was especially useful in religious texts in describing the uselessness and moral degradation of such things as material wealth.

Still, it seems that it wasn't until midway through the EME period that excrement terms began to take on negative connotations in terms of cultural acceptability as word emendation and non-alphanumeric character substitution for particular words started to appear at this time, and it further seems that some of the terms (i.e. *dung*, *dirt,* and *ordure*) never seem to have the same societal reaction with avoidance or emendation as the OE terms *turd* and *shit*, which means that "the language of excrement was positioned

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[428] Ross, *Chaucer's Bawdy*, 79-80, 227.
[429] Except in medicine.
[430] Paul Newman provides accounts of creative approaches to avoid the inconvenience of building proper cesspits: "two men ran [a] pipe from their toilet down into their neighbor's disused cellar" and "a woman discretely ran a pipe from her toilet into the common gutter out in the street," Paul B. Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2001), 148.

along a continuum,"[431] or rather that it is to be understood as organized by registers. Moreover, from the data it was apparent that excrement terms were still used in public discourse and it depended upon author, and possibly register, as to whether these terms were emended or avoided (although *dirt*, *muck*, and *ordure* never seem to have experienced the intensity of taboo as *shit* and *turd*). We can understand this as the development of a taboo towards excrement because strategies for taboo discourse include euphemism, "the use of specialized vocabulary, agent emphasis and omission, rhetorical account and role specification, word avoidance and vagueness, additional information on the limitation of expressions and the use of pro-forms,"[432] and many of these were in use at this time. As such, it seems that as public concern over propriety and privacy developed due to anxiety about social mobility and propriety, a consequence of urbanization and the development of a middle class, so too did restrictions on the language to talk about these phenomena as prescriptions of how to behave in public evolved, which most likely in part influenced the vast influx of words from the EME period.

This new attitude towards the semantic field developed for some time, but eventually the taboo connotation for *turd* seems to have lost the seriousness of its taboo association as letters are usually no longer elided in text, and it is rather just considered impolite, although it is still used as an insult in some contexts (see Table 66, Chapter 2). *Shit*, however, seems to have followed a different trajectory. Like *turd*, it began to take

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[431] Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages*, 17.
[432] Hartmut Shröder, "Taboos Around the Body," *Crossing Cultural Boundaries: Taboo, Bodies and Identities*, ed. Lili Hernández and Sabine Krajewski (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 69-80 at 77.

on taboo connotations in the later EME period, but unlike *turd*, it has more serious taboo associations in polite society because even today sometimes letters are elided in written speech, depending on the writer, the medium, and the intended audience, which suggests register (See Table 70, Chapter 2: the title versus the text of the article). *Turd*, on the other hand, is not used nearly as often as *shit*, which is particularly interesting considering its popularity in the past (See Table 73, Chapter 2). Furthermore Rei R. Noguchi postulates that "placing a taboo on a word seems to increase, not decrease, longevity since the taboo marks the word as socially inappropriate. [Thus as] a consequence of this marking, the word would stand out more in the consciousness of the user," which means that a possible reason why *shit* and *turd* have survived as long as they have in the language is because of past taboo marking and social memory.[433] In contrast, *dung* seems to have fallen out of popularity as a term of abuse, and also refers more specifically to animal excrement rather than all fecal matter. Moreover, its use seems to be considered more clinical and less vulgar than either *turd* or *shit* today. Lastly, as mentioned in Chapter 2, these terms overall experienced a generalizing and pejorative semantic shift trend, and in the case of *shit* an ameliorative semantic shift as well.

Although today it is considered "a truism that excrement is considered noxious in all cultures, in fact the degree of noxiousness and attitudes toward the practical value of dung varied widely in medieval Europe,"[434] which is clearly illustrated in the data in

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[433] Rei R. Noguchi, "On the Historical Longevity of One Four-Letter Word: The Interplay of Phonology and Semantics," *Maledicta: The International Journal of Verbal Aggression* 12 (1996): 29-43 at 30.
[434] Martha Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture: The Devil in the Latrine*, Routledge Studies in Medieval Literature and Culture 2 (New York: Routledge, 2012), 29.

Chapter 2 and the forgoing discussion. In fact with regard to the status of excrement in the Middles Ages and its usage in figurative writing, Martha Bayless contends that

> [Examining] the realities of dung management in the Middles Ages…shows why it was so prominent in theology, art and literature. Dung was ubiquitous, unavoidable in the environment as well as in the private life…. In the Middle Ages excrement was a public reality and hence a staple of public discourses. Human excrement, animal dung, latrines and dungheaps were common topics; there was no call to pretend that humans do not defecate and indeed great motivation, both theological and comic, to dwell upon the fact that they do. Hence scatology was a staple of comedy—then as now—making use of the humorous possibilities of the lowly undignified body.[435]

This essentially means that references to excrement were a useful and popular tool, and that no taboo was attached to excrement during ME and much of EME because of the public reality of excrement and defecation. However, Bayless makes the claim that "dung [was] regarded as filth" because "it has an offensive smell that provokes disgust."[436] However, we cannot determine 1) what kind of smell it was exactly because diets have changed over the centuries, and diet severely influences odor, so we cannot say for certain how "noxious" the odor was, and 2) what was considered disgusting to people during the OE, ME, and EME periods, which will be demonstrated in the following discussion. Much of Bayless' discussion seems to be anachronistic on this aspect, but she does make a valuable point that references to excrement were popular in the public sphere for creative and rhetorical purposes, and also that this likely arose because excrement did not have the taboo it does today.

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[435] Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture*, 29.
[436] Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture*, 30.

In contrast, today society likes to believe that "we know that words are only the names of things. We accept the banning of certain actions, but not a ban on naming them. It would be as if during Prohibition in the United States, not only the sale of whisky had been forbidden but the reading of the bottle labels in a loud voice as well."[437] Unfortunately, this is not actually the case because we do have language bans in the form of taboo language; moreover, most "words that are associated with bodily waste products and the acts of elimination of those products are offensive to most Americans. In childhood parent regularly use euphemism for these products and acts, such as *pee pee*, *doody*, *number 1* and *number 2*, *poop*, *wee wee* or *tinkle*"[438] rather than use the actual terms for the phenomena. This means that reference to the phenomenon is considered impolite or vulgar, which means that this attitude is extended to many excrement terms even when they are not used in reference to bodily functions because of the existing association, effectively making the terms impolite to use in many registers even in reference to phenomena other than excrement. However, it is evident that there is some movement away from considering *shit* taboo, which may be due to the fact that it has generalized into the semantic field of *abstraction*, which creates a more profound disconnect between excrement, the signified, and *shit*, the signifier. Still, although these terms have generalized beyond the semantic field of *excrement* and show some signs of term detabooization, it is unlikely they will entirely lose societal disapproval due to having some association with excrement, unless the cultural climate of society changes to

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[437] Ariel C. Arango, *Dirty Words: Psychoanalytic Insights* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1989), 4.
[438] Jay, *Cursing in America*, 165.

harbor fewer negative reactions to excrement and no longer treats it as a taboo substance, both in language and in reality.

3.3 Attitudes and Reactions

3.3.1 Privacy

There are many possible reasons for this attitude towards this semantic field, and one possibility is that "there was almost no such thing as privacy as we know it"[439] during the OE and ME period, including personal privacy for defecation, urination, and copulation; it is possible that lack of societal distaste due to lack of privacy kept *shit* and the other terms from developing into a more serious taboo. Melissa Mohr states that this was due to the living conditions during feudalism in which everyone was living, eating, and sleeping together in the Great Hall as they had not yet developed facilities for private defecation and urination or private quarters for copulation, and thus lackadaisical attitudes towards cleanliness and bodily effluvia was common, including allowing the accumulation of vomit and spit on the floors.[440] Examples of "public" facilities for defecation and urination are seen in monasteries, which "consisted of wooden or stone supports topped with long wooden planks forming the seats. There were, of [course], holes of appropriate size at regular intervals along the length of the planks,"[441] but without the privacy modern restroom stalls, meaning that defecation in a monastery was conducted in public, as it were, though in designated rooms. In addition, castles and palaces often had "communal facilities like those in monasteries,"[442] but a few others had

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[439] Mohr, *Holy Shit*, 103.
[440] Mohr, *Holy Shit*, 104-05.
[441] Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 139.
[442] Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 142.

"a central room [that] contained four toilets placed with their backs against a central shaft. All the toilets emptied into that shaft. This circular layout, combined with narrow stone partitions between the toilets, permitted several people to use the facilities simultaneously but out of sight of each other,"[443] although again, this was nothing like today's restroom stalls in which the toilet is completely concealed.[444]

This lack of privacy in effect may have stunted the growth[445] of any sensitivity about bodily function. In fact, Norbert Elias theorizes that as a result,

> What was lacking [during the OE and ME periods]…or at least had not been developed to the same degree, was the invisible wall of affects which seems now to rise between one human body and another, repelling and separating, the wall which is often perceptible today at the mere approach of something that has been in contact with the mouth or hands of someone else, and which manifests itself as embarrassment at the mere sight of many bodily functions of others, and often at their mere mention, or as a feeling of shame when one's own functions are exposed to the gaze of others, and by no means only then.[446]

This means essentially that modern embarrassment concerning bodily functions is a modern development.

In fact, it seems that manners dictating privacy and concealment of bodily effluvia did not begin to appear until the 16th century, and only just: a Brunswick Court Regulation from 1589CE stated "'let no one, whoever he may be, before, at, or after meals, early or late, foul the staircases, corridors or closets with urine or other filth, but

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[443] Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 142.
[444] Private homes often utilized outhouses, chamber pots and buckets, or public bathrooms in the city, so the theory about public bathrooms only applies to those who were living together in close quarters. See Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 144-45.
[445] This is not to say that such sensitivity is "normal" and an expected evolution of cultural change, but is rather a culturally specific sensitivity that requires certain conditions to be met for development, such as urbanization and anxiety about certain aspects of societal propriety and privacy.
[446] Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000), 60.

go to suitable, prescribed, places for such relief',"[447] which means that "people were *still* making use of the floor and corners [for urination and defecation], and it was [just] beginning to be seen as a problem."[448] Furthermore, "it used to be perfectly acceptable in the Middle Ages to burp, spit and fart during a good meal,"[449] which may indicate a relaxed attitude towards bodily functions and effluvia during this period, which later changed during the Renaissance and Victorian periods.

3.3.2 Medicine

It must be noted that concerns with language use and particular terms seemed to be centered on anxiety about propriety and perhaps less so from disgust for the substance (though, this does not necessarily apply to the smell). This is supported by the fact that:

> For well over 200 years in early modern Europe, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate all participated in cannibalism on a more or less routine basis. Drugs were made from Egyptian mummies and from the dried bodies of those drowned in North African desert sandstorms. Later in the era the corpses of hanged criminals offered a new and less exotic source of human flesh…. For certain practitioners and patients, there was almost nothing between the head and the feet which could not be used in some way: hair, brain, heart, skin, liver, urine, menstrual blood, placenta, earwax, saliva and *faeces* [emphasis mine].[450]

This was readily evident in the data collected in chapter 2, as up through the 19th century, including American frontier pharmacology during the same period,[451] medicinal remedies included fecal matter as an ingredient. Moreover, this survived in American frontier pharmacology as well. In fact, Susan Signe Morrison confirms that "the extensive web of

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[447] Elias, *The Civilizing Process,* 111-12.
[448] Mohr, *Holy Shit*, 104.
[449] Shröder, "Taboos Around the Body," 74.
[450] Sugg, *Mummies, Canniblas, and Vampires*, 1.
[451] See Wayne Bethard, *Lotions, Potions, and Deadly Elixirs: Frontier Medicine in America* (Lanham, MD: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2004), 133, 182.

words for medicine links excremental words with those of healthful or productive purgation or transformation," and that excrement "was seen as a vital element in medicine… as a curative therapy."[452] Furthermore, concerns about proper digestion and the consistency of your fecal matter or urine were prevalent up through the EME period,[453] and all of this suggests that the level of disgust we have for excrement today may have developed later; thus, the medicinal uses of excrement could be another factor as to why the semantic field did not develop taboo connotations, nor did particular words develop taboo associations, until later.

3.3.2.1 Germ Theory

In addition to medicinal uses, it is possible that the modern level of disgust towards bodily effluvia, particularly excrement, developed later due to germ theory in the 19th century. Germ theory did not develop until this time first because although "the first recorded use of using two lenses to create what is known as a compound microscope was in 1590 by two Swiss spectacle makers," it was not until the middle of the 17th century with Antony van Leeuwenhoek's "single-lens, or simple, microscopes that could magnify 270 times and some as much as 500 ties, a magnification far greater than that of any previous microscope" that single-cell organisms and bacteria were able to be observed, [454] which were then called "animalcules."[455] Even then, physicians and pathologists "were not open to considering how the animalcules could enter the body and cause disease"

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[452] Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages*, 22.
[453] Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages*, 23.
[454] Robert P. Gaynes, *Germ Theory: Medical Pioneers in Infectious Diseases* (Washington D.C.: ASM Press, 2011), 66-67.
[455] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 68.

because "for centuries, physicians were trained in the basic humoral theory of disease according to Galen,"[456] a 2nd century Greek physician who "combined the medical theories and practices of the various sects in ancient Greek medicine into a more unified doctrine."[457] Unfortunately, Galen had "never actually dissected a human cadaver," and his theory of anatomy "was inferred from animal dissection, mainly of apes, sheep, pigs, and goats," which "introduced…egregious errors in human anatomy that remained unchallenged for centuries,"[458] and the "blind acceptance" of his writings as "the ultimate authority" in fact "[stagnated] medical progress for nearly 1,500 years."[459]

Moreover, it wasn't until Giovanni Batista Morgagni "published [in 1761CE] *De Sedibus et Causis Morborum per Anatomen Indagatis,* or *The Seats and Causes of Disease Investigated by Anatomy*…[that] the anatomic concept of disease sent the humoral theory packing,"[460] but "the concept of contagion was still not widely accepted…[and] even more alien to medical theory was a role for microorganisms in disease."[461] It wasn't until the discoveries by Oliver Wendell Holmes[462] and Ignaz Semmelweis[463] and their separate discoveries in the 19th century that puerperal fever was caused by contagions that microorganisms began to be considered as causes of disease. However, this was not initially accepted, and it took many scientists, including Louis Pasteur and Robert Koch, to develop the germ theory of disease.[464] Even then, it took

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[456] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 79.
[457] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 28.
[458] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 79-80.
[459] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 29.
[460] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 87-88.
[461] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 89.
[462] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 125.
[463] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 134-35.
[464] Gaynes, *Germ Theory*, 159-62.

many years for the medical community to accept this premise. However, this would have been around the time that microorganisms would be discovered in fecal matter, which would certainly contribute to the taboo status of the substance. Furthermore, increasingly American society has been obsessed with hand sanitization and cleanliness, which may further contribute to disgust towards and taboo of excrement as "we see feces and their material existence in terms of their bacterial and ecological dimensions"[465] and further try to "'discipline' excrement by ignoring or avoiding traces of its presence."[466]

3.3.3 Other Factors

However, this is not to say that there were no objections to smell and disposal of said excrement. An example of these civic objections happened in the "early 14th century" in London, at which time "there were repeated campaigns to clean up the Wallbrook, a stream that ran near the city's wall…[and] city officials ordered that latrines emptying into the stream to be torn down and no new ones built."[467] Another example of possible societal objection to the smell of excrement was the city regulation that "cesspit cleaning was often limited to the nighttime, presumably to lessen the inconvenience to passers-by and other in the vicinity," although this may have also been "motivated by the practical consideration of taking the toilets out of service during their hours of least use."[468]

However, it is difficult to gauge the actual level of disgust society felt towards excrement at this time, or when said disgust developed, because the data we have is from

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[465] Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages*, 15
[466] Morrison, *Excrement in the Late Middle Ages*, 16.
[467] Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 147.
[468] Newman, *Daily Life in the Middle Ages*, 148.

the written record and not from ethnographic analysis, and unless someone felt something was important to write about, there are usually no records recording thoughts about seemingly mundane topics that might give clues as to the details of medieval everyday life. Thus as Dirk Geearts aptly states, "The study of words, whether etymological, historical, or purely variational, needs to incorporate the study of the objects denoted by those words,"[469] which means that to truly understand the exact changes the semantic field of *excrement* underwent during the EME and early PDE periods, research must also be done on the substance and society's relationship to the substance at that time. Bayless endeavored to do this, stating that "in the moral and theological realm, then, dung was always regarded as disgusting. It loses this valence only in categories where the moral and theological do not apply: practical matters such as farming, or in the framework of comic narrative, which is amoral. The exception to this is satire."[470] However, some of her claims are based on a modern understanding of excrement and are anachronistically applied to the status of excrement during the Middle Ages. Thus, further research into laws, city ordinances, and primers prescribing manners and proper behavior is recommended to further flesh out the circumstances in the EME period that led to the development of language taboo for the semantic field of *excrement* and further the circumstances that led to PDE's treatment of the terms, which ultimately led to the particular taboo we have for excrement today.

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[469] Geeraerts, *Theories of Lexical Semantics*, 24.
[470] Bayless, *Sin and Filth in Medieval Culture*, 31.

3.3.4 Contemporary Attitudes Towards *Shit*

From the forgoing data and discussion, it is apparent that in language communities, "a mode of thinking, a distinctive type of reaction, gets itself established, in the course of a complex historical development, as typical, as normal,"[471] which means that "distinctive habitual modes of thinking become entrenched in language,"[472] which then are evident in the historical lexicon and trackable through tracing the history of semantic fields, as has been done for *shit*. Today, *shit* is considered a vulgar term, but it is at its most vulgar when referring specifically to excrement, as interlocutors typically consider the topic taboo, though it is still highly featured in scatological jokes.

It is curious that out of all the excrement terms available to English speakers, and American PDE speakers in particular, that *shit* would become the most taboo of the scatological terms, considering that it was not the most popular term throughout the history of the English language and originally meant diarrhea specifically and not excrement generally. This may have to do with rhyme or preferences for the phonemic quality of *shit* versus *turd*[473] because these two terms are otherwise share a nearly identical history in the semantic field of *excrement*.[474] It may be, however, just as likely a case of cultural trends that can only be explained in relation to the culture's usage.

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[471] Edward Sapir, *Selected Writing of Edward Sapir in Language, Culture and Personality*, ed. David Mandelbaum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 311.
[472] Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures*, 8.
[473] Rei R. Noguchi provides an interesting case for the survival of *fuck* in English, citing the hardness of consonantal phonemes (i.e. liquids would be considered "soft," whereas stops are considered "hard," and the other classes of consonantal phonemes lie on a continuum in between the two, etc.) and "phonological shape" in addition to meaning as possible reasons why *fuck* has survived so long and become so prolific in the English language. See Noguchi, "On the Historical Longevity," 32-34.
[474] Further research is needed to explore this line of thought with regard to word preference.

It is also interesting to consider why excrement would have developed such strong taboo associations in the Anglo culture, in view of society's relationship with excrement over time. Further, it is unlikely that the layperson would be able to explain the development of the taboo, only having knowledge about the current cultural climate as "more often than not, the grip of people's native language on their thinking habits is so strong that they are no more aware of the conventions to which they are party than they are of the air they breathe." [475]

What is most surprising is the polysemous creativity with which *shit* is now used in spoken and written speech, as illustrated in Tables 74 and 75 in Chapter 2, far and beyond its original semantic field, which seems reflective of the usage evident during the ME period in which terms were generalized for creativity and rhetorical purposes. It is known that "what applies to material culture and to social rituals and institutions applies also to people's values, ideals, and attitudes and to their ways of thinking about the world and our life in it,"[476] which means that the data may indicate the evolution of contemporary cultural opinions about vulgarity and a move away from seemingly archaic attitudes regarding natural phenomena (i.e. defecation, copulation, etc.) towards "de-tabooisation"[477] and a more pragmatic attitude.

Whatever the case, it is clear that further research is required on the contemporary cultural climate concerning societal reactions to excrement beyond the history of the semantic field. Although this exercise has proven fruitful in tracking the evolution of

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[475] Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures*, 8.
[476] Wierzbicka, *Understanding Cultures*, 2.
[477] Shröder, "Taboos Around the Body," 79.

societal attitudes towards excrement terms, it is useful only as a tool to illuminate shifts in societal reactions and the particular flavors of those shifts, but not necessarily the pressures behind those shifts without an examination of co-occurring data from other sources in order to elucidate the exact cultural climate in which attitudes towards this phenomenon changed from neutral to negative, and further from negativity to societal abhorrence. This is the point at which Timothy Jay's emphasis on spoken speech (refer to Chapter 1) would be useful as

> Premodern linguistics was obsessed with written language to the exclusion of the spoken; much modern linguistics has erred on the other extreme, treating writing systems simply as transcription methods. A more useful approach (and interesting from the point of view of incorporating writing systems as cultural innovations potentially impacting on other aspects of language) is to treat sound and written forms as partially independent but partially linked signifying systems.[478]

Thus, correlating all available data, including data from both spoken and written speech and cultural records, is the only possible way to fully illustrate the multifaceted nature of a culture's language usage and change.

3.3.4.1 Euphemisms

When considering *shit,* it is necessarily required to also consider the euphemisms that developed as a result of language taboo. Evident from the data in chapter 2, many euphemisms for excrement have developed, especially recently. Keith Allan and Kate Burridge theorize that these cross-varietal synonyms develop from "middle-class politeness criterion" (MCPC) in which members of middle class society utilize cooperative principles of communication and X-phemisms in order interact peaceably

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[478] Nicholas Evans, "Language Diversity as a Resource for Understanding Cultural Evolution," *Cultural Evolution: Society, Technology, Language, and Religion*, ed. Peter J. Richerson and Morten H. Christiansen (Cambridge, MA: The Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2013), 233-68 at 238.

with each other in "polite" society.[479] This theory initially seems to have merit given the rise of PC language and societal stigma against taboo language. In fact even though "taboos are often observed in private…they are strongest in the public domain, where euphemism is the polite 'thing' and dysphemism (offensive language) breaks social convention. As social beings, humans can ill afford to violate social conventions without suffering adverse sanctions."[480] Suffering societal ostracization hurts an individual's ability to interact with the rest of society in order to attain the things they need or want, and so the MCPC theory initially seems to describe the reasons behind social language conventions and dictates for individual behavior.

However, this theory also says that those that are too rich and powerful to care about social conventions and those that are too poor and uneducated to be aware of social conventions do not avoid taboo language.[481] This is erroneous because it ignores social registers in which most, if not all, members of society change the level of formality of their speech based on the situation and the cultural context.[482] Furthermore, they fail to consider the purposeful rhetorical effect of using taboos in the public domain and speakers' stylistic creativity with informal speech. Lastly, even as they stress the importance of cultural context, they fail to take into account that the socio-cultural climate of the West is changing, slowly relaxing its response to taboo language and allowing for creative colloquial speech innovations. Ultimately, social registers,

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[479] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 34-35.
[480] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 238.
[481] Allan and Burridge, *Forbidden Words*, 35.
[482] Allan, *Natural Language Semantics*, 50.

pragmatic context, and the socio-cultural climate drive the definition, violation, and innovation of taboo language.

3.3.5 Cultural Change and Taboo

From the data, a pattern of usage emerges that mirrors the evolution of societal values over time, but it is also apparent that culture shapes language, merely by usage and shifts in meaning. However, as "a form of coordinative technology, language has a 'parity problem'; that is, it works only if we agree on the joint code," which means that society as a whole must agree upon language usage in order for the transmission of information to occur, let alone language change. This is the same for taboo, which is essentially socially sanctioned behavioral "imperatives to avoid something….because they concern deeply rooted and unquestioned norms and values of a community."[483] Also just as language, taboos develop over time and change, which is perhaps contrary to layperson beliefs about the continuity of taboos in culture.

The issue with studying taboo language in regard to culture is, as mentioned in chapter 1, "our understanding of taboo language is hindered by taboo itself"[484] because the nature of taboo naturally excludes it from much of spoken and written speech, and thus restricts available data. However, we can circumvent this issue through semantic field analysis and collaborative cultural data. Through this method, it is possible to more accurately describe a culture's history and transmission from generation to generation than from other methods alone.

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[483] Shröder, "Taboos Around the Body," 70.
[484] Fairman, *Fuck: Word Taboo*, 33.

3.4 Future Directions

Although much data was gathered in the execution of this study, much data is still required to more fully understand the history of the semantic field of *excrement*. First, further research must be done on individual word usage in each period to further illustrate the relationship between terms in each period. Next, a corpus analysis of both EME and PDE is necessary to describe the genres in which these terms appear, which would further illuminate register; this would also be fruitful to describe the rate at which *shit* is used in the semantic field of *excrement* and when it is used as a part of other fields in PDE, which would further describe contemporary usage trends, expansions of meaning, and societal attitudes. Another useful study would be to compare the semantic field histories of multiple taboo terms, which would further illuminate taboo development and contemporary cultural attitudes. Lastly, it would be interesting to compare semantic field history of taboo terminology between languages, illuminating cultural differences in taboo development and also differences in cultural tendencies and trends with regard to usage of terms in those semantic fields, suggesting cultural attitudes towards said phenomena.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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ABBREVIATION	DESCRIPTION
ACC	Accusative case
AF	Anglo-French
AL	Anglo-Latin
AN	Anglo-Norman
CE	Common Era
DAT	Dative case
EME	Early Middle English
F	French
G	German
GEN	Genitive case
GR	Greek
IMP	Imperative
L	Latin
ME	Middle English
MDu	Middle Dutch
ML	Medieval Latin
MLG	Middle Low German
MO	Mongolian

NEG	Negation
NOM	Nominative
NT	New Testament
OE	Old English
OF	Old French
OI	Old Icelandic
ON	Old Norse
OT	Old Testament
PDE	Present Day English
Per.	Person
Pl	Plural
POSS	Possessive
PP	Past Participle
Pres.	Present tesne
Pret.	Preterit tense
Sg	Singular
SP	Spanish
SUBJ	Subjunctive

LIST OF SYMBOLS

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SYMBOL	DESCRIPTION
æ	ash, <a> as in <hat>
þ	thorn, <th> as in <cloth>
ð	eth, <th> as in <clothe>
ȝ	yogh, orthographic representation of <g>
ƿ	wynn, orthographic representation of <w>
ꝥ	abbreviation for “þæt”
⁊	orthographic representation of <and>, much like <&>
ł	abbreviation for the Latin “vel,” which means “or” and is used to introduce an alternate translation
~	orthographic representation for omitted <n> or <m>